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This Man Wants To Be Your Boss

see page 4

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Put Out the Welcome Mat

This past summer, at our annual NEA Representative Assembly, delegates had a chance to hear one of America's most distinguished educational researchers, David Berliner from Arizona State University. Berliner, the former president of the American Educational Research Association, delivered a message that could not have been plainer.

In the aggregate, said Berliner, America's public schools are "better than they've ever been."

Those of us who walk down school hallways each and every day tend to overlook this reality. We become so immersed in our day-to-day work that we lose sight of the importance of what we're doing and how well we're doing it. We worry instead about all the work that remains unfinished, all the students we haven't reached.

The result? Too many people in our communities have very little sense of what's going on in our schools—at least in part because so many of us shy away from encouraging parents and other local community residents to visit our schools to see for themselves what's going on inside.

Frankly, I can't understand this hesitation. We have a story that we can be proud to tell—and our neighbors need to hear it.

Many of our neighbors, after all, haven't set foot in a school since they were students themselves 20 or 30 or even 40 years ago. They simply have no direct knowledge of the exciting new approaches to learning evident in so many of our schools.

NEA President
Keith Geiger

To help people in our communities separate school fact from fiction, to better *involve* local residents in the education our schools offer, we need to put out the welcome mat—and make our schools places our neighbors really want to get to know.

Dixie Luke, an NEA member in Colorado's Roaring Fork Community Education Association, recently did just that, and she was delighted with the reaction she received.

On the first day of school this year, Dixie handed out NEA "I Took a Child to School Today" stickers to parents who personally brought their kids to class.

The reaction to this simple gesture of good will simply floored Dixie.

"Parents loved it!" she told me. "I missed a husband whose wife I gave a sticker to. They came back to me because he wanted a sticker, too."

Dixie believes strongly that we can and must build bridges to our communities.

"Parents must feel welcome and wanted in our schools," she says, "if we want their children to be happy and productive—and learn."

The more welcome and wanted parents feel, the more potential we have for jointly confronting—and solving—the many challenges our schools and school systems still face. We can't hide from these challenges. Our schools are indeed better than ever, but not everywhere—and nowhere are we succeeding in everything we try to do.

In other words, we can't afford to let ourselves get locked into the status quo. We need to be open to educational change. More than that, we need to do everything we can to play a *leadership* role in change.

If we reach out and work hand-in-glove with our communities, we can realize the change we seek. I see examples of that outreach everywhere.

In Pinellas County, Florida, for instance, several schools are now closing classes early one afternoon a week—to give teacher-teams a solid chunk of uninterrupted time for in-depth cooperative planning.

This radical departure from normal scheduling enjoys widespread community support—because the change was made with community needs very much in mind.

The Pinellas effort reflects those needs. Kids can stay on-site at school, in a special extended-time child care program. They don't have to come home to empty houses during the early closing planning time.

That's the sort of school-community cooperation we NEA members need to nurture all across the United States. We can start building this cooperation today, each and every one of us.

All we have to do is spread a very simple message: America's public schools are truly for the public.

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With parents' support and cooperation, these Virginia Beach, Virginia students are overcoming test phobia. Do you ask parents for help? Or are you sending subtle signals that parents should keep their distance and keep their opinions to themselves?

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While worms wiggle, kids learn hands-on math and science—and teachers learn what teaching techniques work best. A groundbreaking Summer Institute in Council Bluffs, Iowa, doubles as enrichment for students and professional development for teachers.

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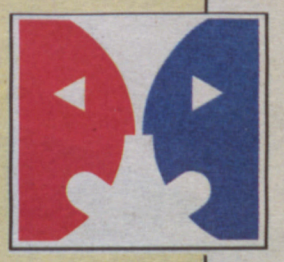
Yes, says an Idaho business education teacher: "Let's make the classroom look more like the real world." No, says a West Virginia teacher: "A child's achievement should never be measured in dollars and cents."



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NATIONAL NEWS

Teaching Two Generations

Sam Pierson

One benefit for Crockett, Texas Even Start parent Teresa Moore (left): discussing daughter Tanyla's development with parent educator Rita Wooten-Johnson (right).

With federal Even Start funds, NEA members in Crockett, Texas help young mothers—and their children—get on track for successful lives.

Eighteen months ago, the Even Start program in Texas' Crockett Independent School District was just words on a federal grant application. Now at the one year mark, Crockett Even Start has a staff of four and 35 families (mostly young mothers) and their 59 kids participating.

Says director Viva Marie Miller: "I was impressed from the very beginning with the Even Start rationale: teach parents to become their child's first teacher."

Even Start is a family literacy program aimed at young parents who have dropped out of school and are at least 17—in practice, mostly young women—and their children under the age of eight. Funded under Chapter 1 of the Elementary-Secondary Education Act, Even Start was up for reauthorization in the final days of the 103rd Congress last month (see box).

The goal of Even Start is to develop parents who are self-sufficient, contributing members of society, and whose children are successful learners in school.

To that end, Even Start provides young families with three kinds of assistance:

- in-home training in parenting for the parents
- literacy education for the parents (typically GED preparation)
- preschool for their three- and four-year-olds (daycare for the younger ones).

Even Start parent educators Rita Wooten-Johnson and Ann Martinez make the home visits, and bus driver Billy Groves gives mothers and children round-trip transportation from home to the district's early childhood center.

"These young parents are people who've fallen through the cracks," Miller explains. "Not only do they have problems with literacy, many also lack coping skills, such as having a morning routine. It used to take us forever to get them all up and dressed and on the bus.

"We try to bridge them to more appropriate coping skills," Miller continues, "without destroying the 'person.'"

One of Crockett Even Start's most enthusiastic participants is Teresa Moore. Last year, Moore had a baby, Tanyla, her first. She realized she didn't know much about babies so she asked around for help. A district official told her about the new Even Start program. She signed up.

Since then, mother and daughter have come to the district's Early Childhood Center nearly every day for GED class and daycare, respectively. And once a month Moore has received a home visit from Rita Wooten-Johnson, one of the two parent educators.

A home visit lasts from 45 to 60 minutes, usually beginning with an update on the child's growth and development.

"For instance," Wooten-Johnson explains, "many of the parents have two-year-olds, and I tell them you have to watch what you do around children that age because you're molding them."

Like Viva Miller, Wooten-Johnson is a former teacher, but she has also done community work with adults.

"Helping these young mothers is like opening a blossom," Wooten-Johnson says. "They can do so much more than they think."

Teresa Moore learned enough in her first year to be hired as a receptionist/file clerk in the Even Start office last summer. (The program runs year round.) She also learned a lot about being a mother.

"I couldn't have made it the first year without the program," Moore says now. "I wouldn't have known what to do when Tanyla was sick or teething."

Moore is so enthusiastic about Even Start that she has recruited nine new participants.

Good things seem to flow from Even Start. In Crockett, four parents have gotten the GED so far, one has a job with the Texas Department of Corrections, and one is in nursing school. Teresa Moore wants to go to college to become a parent educator so she can help others as she's been helped.

An extra bonus: The local Association has 34 new members, all recruited by Viva Marie Miller from the ranks of the early childhood staff, plus other teachers, administrators, and support workers in the early childhood building.

—Nancy R. Needham

Congress and Even Start: An Update

In early October, reauthorization of Even Start and the rest of the Elementary-Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was in limbo—hostage to the end-of-session delaying tactics of House and Senate Republican leaders.

But the logjam broke on October 5, when Senators voted 77 to 20 to reauthorize ESEA for the next five years.

The final $12.7 billion package targets more money to the nation's poorest children, helps fund school reform and new technology initiatives, puts more emphasis on violence prevention, including a one-year expulsion requirement for students who carry guns to school, and expands programs for teachers' professional development, among other things.

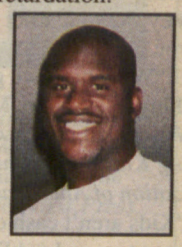
The Even Start program aimed at children and their families received $102 million under the new bill.

HEROES & ZEROES

A generous dividend to NationsBank for its corporate policy of allowing employees two hours of paid time a week to volunteer in local schools. What a welcome way of giving back to employees, customers, children, and communities. Fellow corporate citizens, take note.

A National-Rifle-Association-Poster-Child Award to Maryland Del. C. Ronald Franks, who recently raffled off an assault rifle to raise money for his Senate campaign. The Colt AR-15, which was since banned by the crime bill, netted Franks a tidy $16,650. But the money—and the fundraising faux pas—didn't help. Franks lost.

An enthusiastic slam dunk to basketball superstar Shaquille O'Neal for his recent support of Best Buddies, a national nonprofit organization that promotes friendships between college students and persons with mild to moderate mental retardation. O'Neal taped two public service announcements for the organization for free—despite his recent quip that he charges $5 million for his best smile.



A chorus of "Which Side Are You On?" for Bill Keever and Dan Peavy, who somehow find it appropriate to sit on the Dallas school board and the board of a foundation that provides $1,000 annual scholarships to help students leave public schools. Ouch! That kind of fence-sitting can get quite uncomfortable over time.

Hats off to the "Magnificent Seven"—a group of Republican legislators who helped defeat what could have been precedent-setting voucher legislation in Arizona. Despite extreme pressure from Governor Symington and the state party, the seven lawmakers stood firm for students and public education. Righteous resolve should be rewarded.

Best Near-Scrooge Imitation goes to the Chicago Board of Education for its efforts to deny a heroic teacher his due. Physical education teacher Clarence Notree was shot in the wrist three years ago while protecting students from gunfire in the gym. But the Board denied Notree workers comp. It seems saving children's lives didn't fit his job description. Late update: The Board paid up.

COVER STORY

John Golle thinks there's a pile of money to be made off kids. That's why he's leading the rush of private companies vying to run public schools. Yours may be next.

Is There GOLD In Them 'Thar Schools?

It's official. Last month, Hartford, Connecticut became the nation's first city to hand its entire school system to a private, profit-making firm. By a 6-3 vote, the school board signed a five-year contract with Education Alternatives, Inc., a Minneapolis-based corporation.

Sitting in the audience for the vote—front row, center—was EAI chief executive John Golle. For Golle, who's become the pied piper of privatization as he courts school decision makers far and wide, the Hartford contract, with its 32 schools, 24,000 students, and $210 million budget, is his biggest coup.

Golle is leader of a new brand of educational entrepreneurs. Their message: We can teach your kids better, more efficiently, and we can make a profit, too. "Trust us," they say to district officials, "What have you got to lose?"

"What have we got to lose? Everything," says Alex Molnar, a University of Wisconsin professor and author of *Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of American School Reform*. "Kids aren't cash crops for corporate investors and public education can't be traded in for a corporate bottom line."

"Privatizers put together these deals for profit. Children's education comes later," adds Judy Behnke, director of NEA's Center for the Preservation of Public Education. "When you're trying to please stockholders, who has time to worry about kids?"

These days, it's John Golle who's attracting most of the attention. The 50-year-old former Xerox copier salesman is an entrepreneur with a talent for talking and making money. By age 26, he was running Xerox' $11 million sales training program. By 30, he had his own firm. By 41, he'd sold the firm and was a multimillionaire looking to make more money.

That search ended in education. Armed with a teaching curriculum called Tesseract and a company he called Education Alternatives, Inc., Golle tried to create a chain of for-profit private schools. But when the private-school path didn't make money, he turned his sights on managing public schools. His selling point: EAI could clean up the schools, run them more efficiently, raise student achievement, all at a profit.

In 1992, Baltimore City Schools took the deal, signing a five-year, $26.7 million contract with EAI to run nine inner-city schools.

Why are for-profit efforts so dangerous? "If you look at the history of privatization efforts, they're filled with stories of fraud and abuse," says NEA's Judy Behnke.

EAI's Golle, however, insists his company's Baltimore schools are different.

But is this the case? Is education better in Baltimore now that EAI's running some schools?

An independent study by researcher Olivia S. Reusing, commissioned by the Maryland State Teachers Association, shows that at least two EAI-run schools fall well short of the ideals described in the company literature.

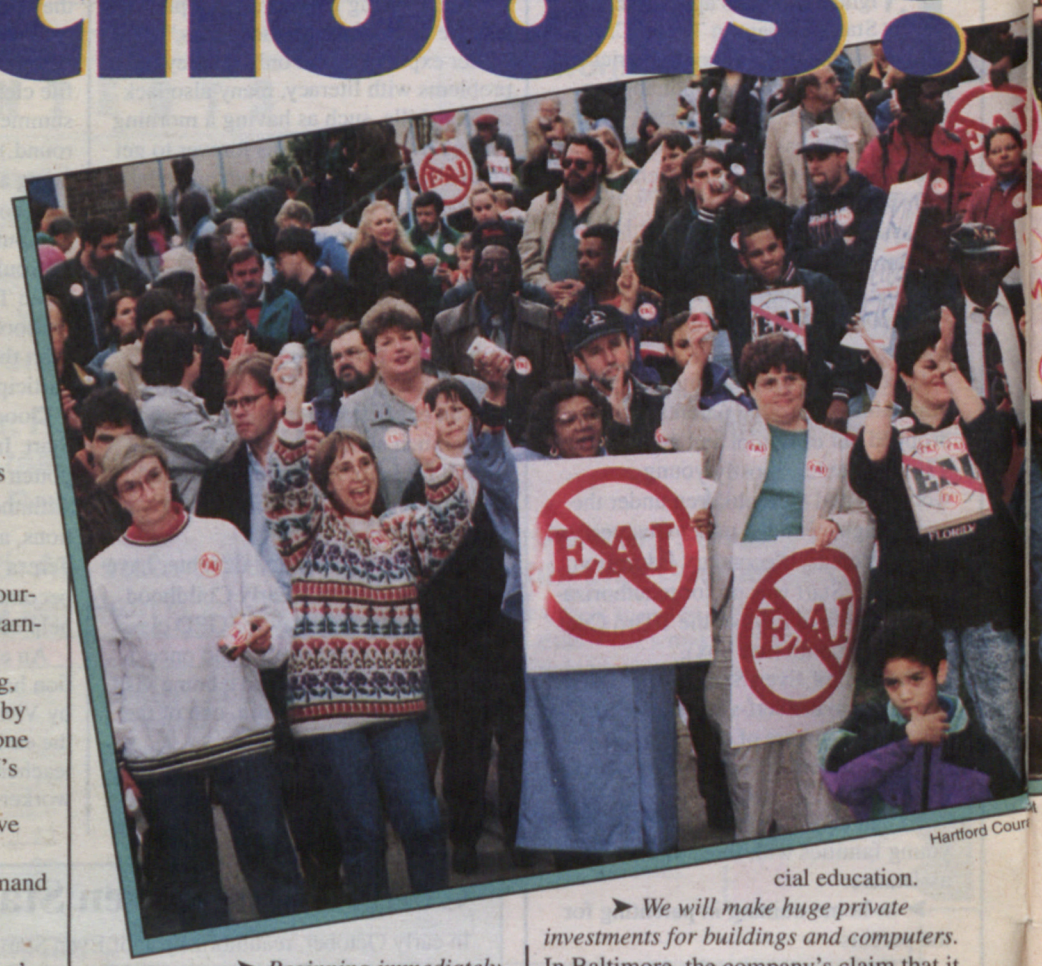
EAI's boast, for example, that kids use computers for various creative, interactive work is very misleading. Most of the computer work in EAI schools is drillwork and doesn't encourage students to act as self-directed learners.

Golle says MSTA's report is wrong, labeling it just another biased report by unions. But the MSTA study is just one piece of evidence that questions EAI's methods for running schools.

Last June, a front-page investigative story by *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reporters Joe Rigert and Carol Command stated that the firm has oversold its record and made a number of false claims. Here are some of the company's own claims, followed by the facts:

➤ *We will create world-class schools, spending no more than you are presently allocating*. In Baltimore, spending at EAI-run schools has gone up $8 million, or 20 percent. EAI took home almost $2 million in profit the first year.

➤ *School attendance is up dramatically in the EAI schools*. According to the *Tribune*, attendance went down for most of the EAI schools in the first year.



Hartford Courant

➤ *Beginning immediately, each year will reveal a measurable increase in student achievement.* Overall student scores have actually declined twice since EAI has been involved according to district test results.

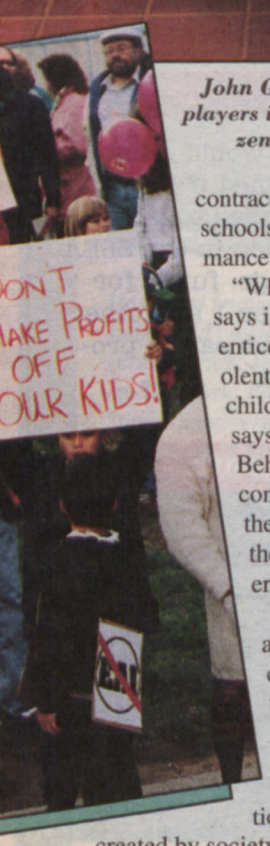
➤ *At-risk students are well served, a standard by which any world-class school system should be judged*. In Baltimore, the company fell far short of serving the special needs of at-risk students, putting EAI in violation of legal requirements for special education.

➤ *We will make huge private investments for buildings and computers.* In Baltimore, the company's claim that it invested $6 million of private capital actually amounted to the using of school funds for computers. And in an interview with the *Tribune*, EAI's Golle acknowledged that the promised $20 million for Hartford buildings and computers would be school funds.

➤ *EAI will be held accountable to produce under a performance contract.* According to the *Tribune*, even though Golle said there would be one, the EAI

COVER STORY

Chris Usher



John Golle heads Education Alternatives, Inc., now one of the main players in the bid to privatize public school operations, but many citizens like these Hartford residents, are resisting EAI's sales pitch.

contract with Baltimore schools has no performance requirement.

"What the *Tribune* says is that if you're enticed by EAI's benevolent concern for the children, think again," says NEA's Judy Behnke. "Private companies deny they're profiteers, but their actions say otherwise."

Alex Molnar agrees. "It isn't a coincidence that these companies target poor inner-city schools where the conditions—conditions created by society—are so bad that district officials say 'What's the risk,' we'll try anything.'"

What's the answer? "The school community must work together toward quality public education," says Behnke. "Corporate America can be a part of that effort—as long as children's needs come first."

But don't expect EAI to get its priorities straight. At a Senate hearing on privatization last January, Golle himself summed up his attitude. "We're not going to go away," Golle told opponents. "And if you don't like it," he said, "that's tough."

—Anita Merina

Battling Back: Some Resources

The People's Cause: Mobilizing for Public Education. NEA's Center for the Preservation of Public Education has prepared an extensive set of background materials on the for-profit companies seeking contracts to manage individual public schools and entire school districts.

Many of these materials are available through NEA Online, the Association's electronic information service. You can download these materials onto your home computer or share local experiences battling privatization attempts with other NEA members across the country.

To find these materials, just key word "NEA Local" and click the "Must Reads Library." To subscribe to NEA Online, see page 25.

Contracting Out: Strategies for Fighting Back. An NEA manual for stopping efforts to privatize cafeteria, transportation, and other school services. Limited copies are available from the NEA Office of Constituent Group Relations, attention: Ann Thompson, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Privatization's Players

EAI isn't the only private company to look out for. In fact, when the Portsmouth, Virginia school district announced last year it would entertain proposals to run its schools, 22 private companies, including EAI, replied. Though Portsmouth officials ultimately decided not to hire any of the private companies, other districts may not be so smart. Here are just a few of the privatizers to look out for:

The Edison Project: The brainchild of Whittle Communications founder Chris Whittle, the Edison Project promised it would "invent and build a new American School." But now that Edison's run into problems financing private, for-profit schools, it's set its sights on taking over public school districts—districts where the per pupil expenditure is $5,500 or more.

Alternative Public Schools Inc.: This private company, successfully rejected by Nashville school officials with the help of the Nashville Education Association, has resurfaced in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania. APS proposes taking total control of Wilkinsburg Middle School, contracting out all support services, and furloughing the school's 26 teachers for APS-selected teachers.

Marriott Corporation: One of the largest subcontractors, Marriott's contract services include food services and facilities management.

Johnson Controls World Services: Johnson Controls is best known for its management of custodial services in nine EAI-run Baltimore schools. But in Fairfax, Virginia the company drew negative publicity and a pink slip from county officials because it couldn't keep buses on their routes. Consequently hundreds of students were left stranded at bus stops. The county's now gone back to having county workers maintain the buses.

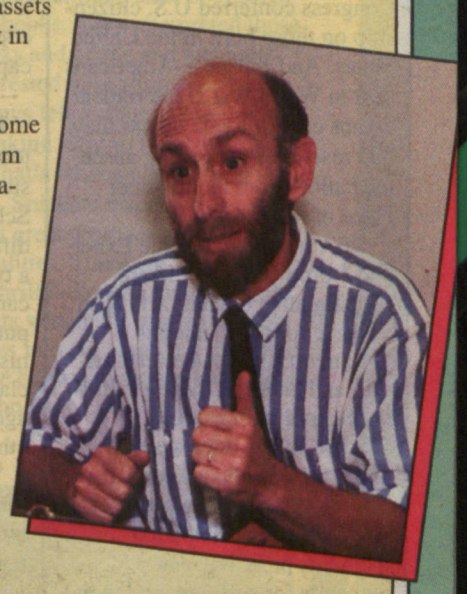
ARA Group: Organized as a vending company, ARA now provides or manages a variety of services, including running cafeterias, managing health care, and distributing supplies.

Crushed in the Rush

When privatization wins, who loses? NEA Today *asked Alex Molnar, professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and author of the upcoming book,* Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of American School Reform, *published by Westview Press.*

You've called the fight against privatization an epic struggle. Why?
Because if we don't respond commensurately to the effort private companies are making to get into public schools, we won't be able to save public education for future generations of children.
If we allow private companies to strip the assets of our public schools, they won't be rebuilt in my lifetime or the next.

Public schools in many communities are really the last institutions where children come into contact with adults who care about them and engage them in sustained nurturing relationships. With privatization, that will be destroyed.



Where does the profit come in for these companies looking to privatize?
That's simple. Anyone who's looked at a school budget knows that the big money is in reducing personnel costs, lowering wages, and reducing benefits. When you look closely at Baltimore's EAI-run schools, you see the corporate game plan for making money: Fire experienced paraprofessionals and support staff and bring in workers at reduced wages and benefits.

How does that affect the schools and communities?
When you reduce the wages or eliminate the jobs of paraprofessionals, bus drivers, clerical staff, custodians, food service workers, and other personnel, many of whom live in the community, you undermine the economic base of the community and increase the social costs.

These people no longer have the opportunity to stabilize the community. Above all, you get rid of people who have intimate knowledge of the children and their lives.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Women's Rights:
The Battle Didn't End in 1920

Most American women gained the right to vote when the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920. But for years many others remained disenfranchised.

August 26, 1995 will mark the 75th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. But two NEA members are working to remind their students that the fight for true universal suffrage didn't end there.

Through most of this century, African Americans in many states faced two obstacles designed to keep them from the polling booth. The poll tax, which required paying a fee to vote, survived until the 24th Amendment was ratified in 1964. And it took the 1965 Voting Rights Act to abolish the literacy test, which in some states kept more than half the eligible population from voting.

In states wanting to evade the intent of the 15th Amendment, poor, uneducated white women (and men) faced property and literary barriers—until "grandfather" laws distinguished them from Blacks. And from 1922-36, American women were stripped of their citizenship (and, therefore, their new voting rights) if they married Chinese or Japanese men who were ineligible for naturalization.

American Indians could vote only after 1924, when an act of Congress conferred U.S. citizenship on those born in the United States. And Japanese-Americans sent to World War II internment camps couldn't vote unless they had resources for getting absentee ballots from their former place of residence.

NEA members Bonnie Exner and Dorothy Battenfeld are keeping alive crucial facts such as these for their students.

Exner teaches American history and civics at Ransom Middle School in Pensacola, Florida. In her three seventh-grade history classes, students discuss early women's suffrage and political participation, women's pre-Civil War demands for suffrage, and their postponement of those demands in favor of Black male suffrage. They study the suffrage movement "greats"—Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt,

Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass—and prepare reports on their favorites.

A more hands-on approach enlivens Exner's three civics classes. She teaches students to write to their senators and representatives. Usually she mails or hand delivers the letters. But last year, she videotaped the best letter writers reading their letters in front of a bulletin board of U.S. presidents—and sent copies of the tape to the state capital in Tallahassee.

In California, Dorothy Battenfeld, who teaches American studies at Montgomery High School in Santa Rosa, takes a different approach. She teaches a two-hour, theme-based American studies class that, as she puts it, "includes all people's history under all topics." Her class includes honors and average kids, and kids from many ethnic and racial groups.

Weaving women's history throughout the curriculum, Battenfeld teaches about early attitudes and laws about community participation by various groups, including African, European, and North and South American Indian women. Students read diaries of women who went West, study why western states were the first to grant women suffrage and a role in politics, and discover how women later lost those rights.

When Battenfeld teaches the Civil War amendments, she asks what might have happened had women been defined as "persons" by the 14th Amendment or included in the 15th—which prohibited denying the right to vote because of color. When she teaches the 19th Amendment, she asks kids to discuss how progressive it was.

Regardless of how they teach about women suffrage, educators are certain to spark student interest in the 19th amendment.

—Mary Faber
NEA Human and Civil Rights

Anniversary Aids

The 16-page Women Win the Vote gazette—containing biographies, bibliographies, celebration events, resource lists, a chronology, and a commemorative poster—is available for $1for a single copy. The Suffrage Anniversary Program Organizing Kit, including the gazette, film and video lists, lists of suffrage performers and scheduled programs, and information on programs planning, costs $7.50. Write to: National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492.

Because of an editing error in last month's human rights column, Reno High School was wrongly identified as having had walls filled with graffiti and swastikas, reflecting ethnic and racial tensions. We apologize for the error.

WASHINGTON WATCH

Person To Watch

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) chairs the Committee on Labor and Human Resources. Kennedy was a key player in the recent fight to win passage of the Elementary-Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Best Win For Education Employees

Hands down, reauthorization of ESEA in early October. The NEA led the come-from-behind lobbying effort of some 63 organizations to secure reauthorization of the $11 billion (in 1995) program for another five years. ESEA funds Chapter I and most other aid-to-public-education programs. Conservative Republicans had pulled every stunt, including the threat of a filibuster, to keep ESEA from passing before the 103rd Congress adjourned.

Most Serious Setback

The defeat of health care reform was the centerpiece of the Republicans' scorched earth policy in the 103rd Congress. That policy: let nothing pass—health care reform, ESEA, campaign finance reform—that the Democrats could take credit for in the November 8 elections.

And What You Can Do

Remember to vote—against the members of Congress who were willing to shut down federal aid to your school district. Make no mistake, that's what most likely would have happened if ESEA had failed to pass. Included in the ESEA package: funds for Chapter 1 and other vital education programs.

Political Cartoon of the Month

"Mommy, where do Daddies come from?"

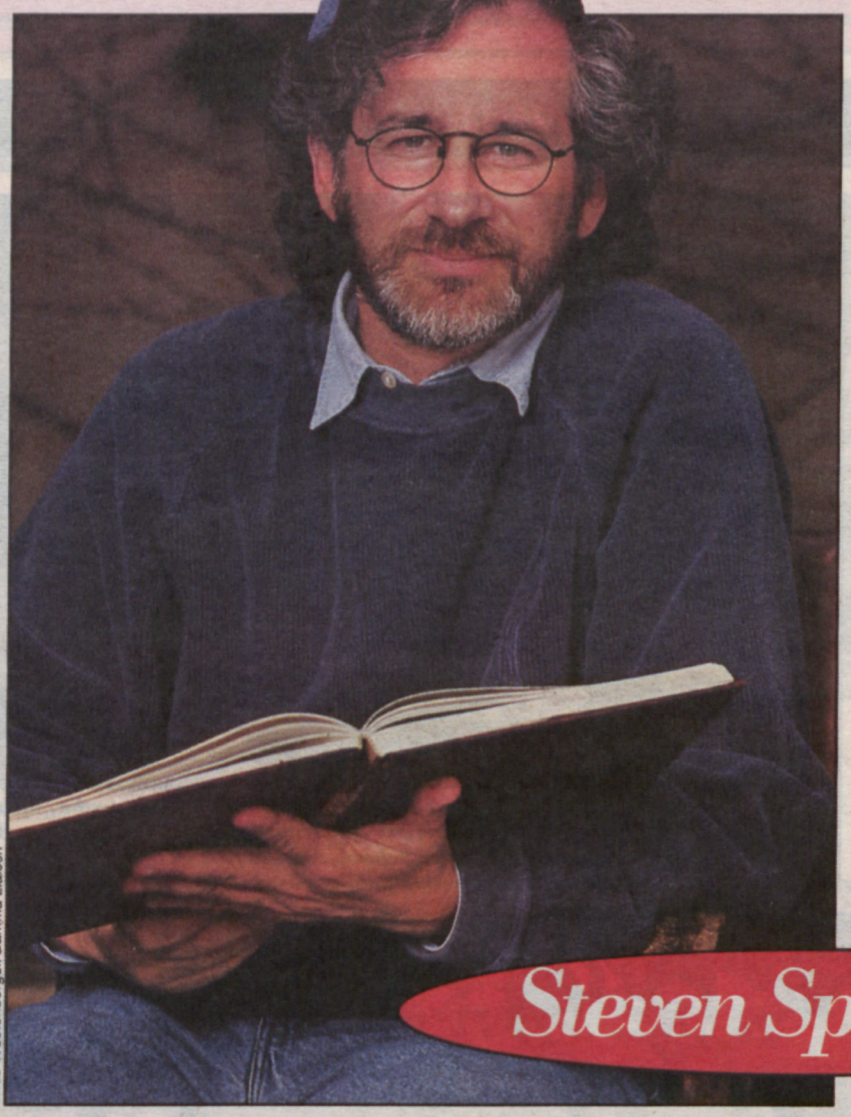
Jim Borgman/King Features Syndicate

Congressional Quote of the Month

"It is time for us to accept the fact that the health insurance industry and their allies in the Congress have succeeded in their goal. They prosper while millions of Americans suffer."

—Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), national health care supporter since 1955.

Meet:



Theo Westenberger/Gamma Liaison

Steven Spielberg

Calling The Shots

*He is best known for spectacular sound and cinematic blockbusters—*Jurassic Park, Jaws, *and* Raiders of the Lost Ark. *But in 1994, director Steven Spielberg won critical acclaim and a host of Academy Awards for* Schindler's List, *a stark, black-and-white film about the Holocaust. That film is now the cornerstone of a nationwide Holocaust education project led by Spielberg's company Amblin Entertainment. He spoke recently with* NEA Today *staff writer Anita Merina.*

You're suggesting schools offer a course on tolerance. Why?
Because so many of the thousands of letters I received from young people said, "My teachers didn't tell me about the Holocaust. My parents never told me there was a Holocaust. I didn't know this happened to the Jews."

It was an appalling revelation to me that the basic facts are not widely known in this country among young people despite the fact that this happened only 50 years ago.

I discovered there's very little written about the Holocaust—in any of the history textbooks. And several history books didn't even mention that the Jews were the primary victims of Hitler's genocide.

What about kids who say the Holocaust isn't relevant to their world?
I'll never forget a screening for 400 African-American students at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. One of them, about 14 years old, said, "I really liked the movie, but why do I need to see what the Jews went through? It's not my story, it's their story." Another kid answered very powerfully, "Pain is pain."

I'd tell them that every drive-by shooting or incident of hatred in the neighborhood or in the classroom *is* related to the past. Much of the violence today can be traced back to the fact that our generation wasn't educated in the history of hatred from the beginning of time. In order to understand what's happening today, you have to look back.

Where do educators fit in the *Schindler's List* program?
There won't be any relevance if kids today aren't taught that connection to their past and taught that tolerance breaks that repetition of events.

But teachers have to be interested. I call it the five T's: Teaching Teachers To Teach Tolerance. You can't force teachers to teach something that they don't believe in or don't have any interest in.

We offer a curriculum and free screenings of the film at a designated theater for program participants. We're working with the organization "Facing History, Facing Ourselves," to put together that curriculum, which includes discussions, reading material, and study guides.

***Schindler's List* is available on video but you insist on theater screenings. Why?**
First, it's a field trip, so it's a mini-event. Then, it takes some effort to get there. Next, it takes students out of the classroom and into a strange place. It's dark, and every motion picture theater has all the incumbent magic that when the lights go down anything goes. The students are "there." It makes kids feel much more a part of the experience because they themselves don't feel they are on safe, familiar ground.

Certainly the Jews weren't on safe, familiar ground when they were experiencing the horrors perpetrated on them.

How do schools join the *Schindler's List* program?
Educators should contact their district superintendent because most will have received information from their governor's office. If the program isn't in place, let your superintendent know you want it.

Are the cuts in arts education threatening the development of budding young directors?
Well, you can teach art and the history of art, but you really can't teach talent. You can certainly open up opportunities by providing courses, but, usually, those courses begin in college. Do you know where I began?

Where?
I began with theater. And I still think high schools do great with theater and theater arts courses. My high school didn't have a motion picture course or television course, so I took theater arts. I read plays, worked as a stage manager and director. Those experiences fueled my interest in the creative arts. I still think those classes can help kids who want to direct someday.

Were there teachers who were memorable to you?
I can count on one hand the four teachers who influenced my life—Ms. Griffith, Mr. Pfister, Dr. Foote, Ms. Lynch. It's amazing how their names are there for me and have a lot of value to my life today.

Why were they so special?
Because they were the type who didn't talk through state-sponsored textbooks. They interpreted those books and others and were also interested in hearing from us. I always felt as though they were speaking right to me.

That's what made them so special. Students respond to teachers with great attitudes and great personalities. There are teachers who are a thrill to listen to and there are teachers who make you go to sleep 10 minutes into the class. It's like the difference between who's a movie star and who isn't.

Grassroots

State

NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina legislature is the nation's first to grant a raise—4 percent—to teachers who receive National Board Certification. The 1994-95 budget, supported by the North Carolina Association of Educators, also funds participation fees for teachers who complete the process, as well as up to three days of release time for candidates to work on portfolios and prepare for the assessment exercises. Check next month's *NEA Today* for a complete update on the new National Certification process.

LOUISIANA

Teachers have gained greater authority over discipline in their classrooms, thanks to a new law that the Louisiana Association of Educators helped to develop and get passed. Now any student who strikes a teacher in class must be permanently removed unless the teacher objects. Teachers may remove extremely disruptive students from class and can refer parents who refuse to take responsibility for their kids to the juvenile court system's "Families in Need of Services" program.

MINNESOTA

The state legislature has appropriated $250,000 to Shared Decisions Minnesota, seven education groups, including the Minnesota Education Association, that are collaborating on education reform. Sustaining support for current successful site-based reforms at the local and state level is one goal. Some 25 districts—each with a team of teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, and board members—participate in the program, with more to be added next spring.

TEXAS

A single test—the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)—is "the most important factor in shaping curriculum," say 60 percent of teacher members in a recent survey by the Texas State Teachers Association. That's not right, says TSTA President Richard Kouri. "TAAS doesn't measure the complete school curriculum," he notes, "yet the state's using TAAS scores to rate schools and districts." TSTA is urging the state to find other measures of students' progress, such as portfolios of their work.

IN CALIFORNIA

A New Look For Fall

A blue and white combo is the fashion rage this year in Long Beach. Virtually all of the district's 57,000 elementary and middle school students showed up at the start of the year sporting these colors.

What trendsetter wields such influence? The Long Beach Unified School District, the first public school system in the nation to require school uniforms in all its elementary and middle schools.

The district began a student uniform pilot program five years ago to address parents' concerns that clothes could incorrectly identify a child as a member of a particular gang, thereby inviting danger from rival gang members.

During the pilot program, student attendance and behavior improved, self-esteem rose, and in many cases grades improved. Parents were happy that school uniforms cost much less than the previous school wardrobe.

Says the district's public information officer Dick Van Der Laan, "Youngsters no longer stay home because they're ashamed of their appearance. They're more comfortable and there's a better classroom environment.

"And to those who say school uniforms violate free expression, I say, try standing next to a gang member and see how freely you can express youself."

Photos by Bob Riha, Jr.

One student finds a certain celebrity in uniformity as the media, including Japan's NHK network (above), report on her district's dress code. Long Beach students, below at the Mary Butler School, are the first to be affected by a new California law allowing public school districts to require uniforms.

IN NEW YORK

Big Gains Long Overdue in Buffalo

Buffalo teachers will see a 26 percent pay raise over the next two years, thanks to their new contract. But the whopping gain is counterbalanced by the fact that, until now, Buffalo teachers were among the lowest paid in the state, with a starting salary of $20,800.

What's more, for the past four years the 3,900-member Buffalo Teachers Federation has been engaged in a court battle after a state judge failed to enforce a $142 million contract negotiated in 1990.

"Teachers told me that the board slowly bled them to death without a raise," says BTF President Phil Rumore. "They wanted this to end."

For a while the endpoint appeared to be a strike, an illegal option for public employees under New York state law. But BTF members, working together with parents, conducted informational pickets at schools, board members' houses, and even the state Democratic convention to publicize the protracted negotiations.

The actions produced, in addition to the new contract, an agreement that allows BTF members to continue their lawsuit to get another 31 percent for the past four years. Teachers also retain health insurance benefits that are more generous than those their suburban counterparts receive.

"The new contract is far short of what Buffalo teachers deserve," notes Rumore. "But our right to continue litigation for back pay for current teachers and retirees is unprecedented."

IN MAINE

Natural Path to Learning

Marilyn Gryskwicz is an outdoor enthusiast. And kids in Gorham, Maine are better off for it.

Gryskwicz, a bus driver and president of the Gorham Educational Support Association, has created a wildlife habitat for the students of White Rock School. And features such as the nature trail and animal feeding stations are more than mere toys. They've been integrated into an interdisciplinary curriculum.

"I wouldn't take no for an answer, and this project shows it," she notes proudly. "Children can observe wildlife, plant trees, and go on nature walks—learning all the way. Creating a curriculum to support it made it even more exciting."

Gryskwicz worked with GESA, the Gorham Teachers Association, administrators, and members of the community to bring her vision to life. Recently she received the added boost of a $4,000 grant from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

"I believe that children can learn so much more by taking a look at their own environment," says Gryskwicz. And now, in Gorham, they are.

Gordon Chibrowski

GESA President Marilyn Gryskwicz teaches students that moss grows on trees, stumps—and clay pots painted with yogurt.

IN MASSACHUSETTS

Recert Redux

Massachusetts has become the 47th state to require teacher recertification.

New regulations to implement the Education Reform Act of 1993 mandate that all teachers in the state get recertified every five years. To do so, teachers must have participated in at least 120 hours of professional development that would help them remain current in their primary subject matter and professional skills by June 18, 1999. The cost of recertifying: $100 for each "primary certificate."

"We welcome the opportunity to re-examine and redefine professional development to make it more meaningful," says MTA President Bob Murphy. "But many variables like cost, time during the workday, and the district commitment to helping teachers get recertified will have to be negotiated at the local level."

Murphy notes the new regulations call for districts to identify "no cost" options among the array of seminars, projects, and courses that are acceptable for recertification. MTA intends to press for such options.

The law affects about 65,000 teachers, as well as school nurses, principals, and guidance counselors.

DOLLARS PER POCKET

Most Incomes Beat Inflation

American per capita income rose 3.2 percent overall in 1992-93—to $20,781—enough to outpace a 2.7 percent inflation rate.

But in Arkansas, California, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Washington, income growth didn't keep up with inflation. (Arkansas, however, did enjoy a substantial 7.8 percent gain in 1992.) New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York fell behind as well, though they remain on the top 10 list of wealthiest states.

Connecticut residents pulled in the highest per person income for 1992-93. Montanans enjoyed the largest leap in their income—6.3 percent.

Florida, the only state in which inflation beat income growth in 1991-92, rebounded nicely with 5.2 percent growth.

State (rank)	Per Capita Income	Change '92-93	State (rank)	Per Capita Income	Change '92-93
Alabama (41)	$17,106	3.7%	Montana (39)	$17,413	6.3%
Alaska (7)	$23,008	3.4	Nebraska (23)	$19,757	2.8
Arizona (36)	$18,119	3.6	Nevada (8)	$22,747	4.1
Arkansas (49)	$15,994	2.6	New Hampshire (10)	$22,169	2.0
California (11)	$21,884	1.3	New Jersey (2)	$26,732	2.4
Colorado (15)	$21,475	4.4	New Mexico (46)	$16,333	5.2
Connecticut (1)	$27,957	3.0	New York (3)	$24,771	2.6
Delaware (13)	$21,735	3.0	North Carolina (33)	$18,688	4.8
D.C. (—)	$29,836	5.4	North Dakota (40)	$17,123	0.0
Florida (19)	$20,710	5.2	Ohio (25)	$19,627	3.7
Georgia (29)	$19,203	4.0	Oklahoma (42)	$17,035	3.4
Hawaii (6)	$23,378	4.3	Oregon (27)	$19,447	3.9
Idaho (38)	$17,540	5.2	Pennsylvania (16)	$21,241	3.1
Illinois (9)	$22,534	3.5	Rhode Island (17)	$21,203	4.8
Indiana (30)	$19,161	4.2	South Carolina (44)	$16,810	4.0
Iowa (35)	$18,324	0.8	South Dakota (37)	$17,977	3.6
Kansas (21)	$19,874	3.4	Tennessee (34)	$18,415	4.5
Kentucky (43)	$16,954	3.2	Texas (31)	$19,134	3.7
Louisiana (45)	$16,588	4.6	Utah (48)	$16,138	4.1
Maine (32)	$18,775	3.3	Vermont (28)	$19,442	3.4
Maryland (5)	$23,920	3.1	Virginia (14)	$21,544	3.2
Massachusetts (4)	$24,475	3.6	Washington (28)	$21,733	2.2
Michigan (20)	$20,542	4.4	West Virginia (47)	$16,148	4.0
Minnesota (18)	$21,017	2.5	Wisconsin (22)	$19,822	3.7
Mississippi (50)	$14,708	4.7	Wyoming (24)	$19,724	4.5
Missouri (26)	$19,559	3.1	USA	$20,781	3.2

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

Local

WASHINGTON

Decentralized decision-making and democratically run schools at the building level. These are the goals of the "Restructuring Network"—Association members, UniServ staff, administrators, and superintendents from 20 school districts in the state's Eastern Region looking at new ways to adjust the old hierarchy. The UniServ councils and the Washington Education Association are funding a series of lectures and seminars led by education analyst Pat Dolan to train district teams.

RHODE ISLAND

Voters in Westerly passed an $18.3 million bond issue this summer that will be used to make additions and renovations to all six existing schools and construct a new elementary school. A record 41 percent of voters turned out for the election, following a highly effective grassroots campaign by the Westerly Teachers Association in concert with 26,000 senior citizens, business people, parents, and other voters who came together in support of the referendum.

UTAH

A recent Utah court of appeals ruling upheld the Park City Education Association's right to negotiate and enforce a master agreement with its school board.

"The Park City lawsuit was a test of whether any master agreement was enforceable in Utah," says UEA attorney Mike McCoy. Earlier, a lower court had ruled that a master contract provision making the contract controlling in cases of conflict with board policy was "an unlawful limitation of the board's ... authority." About 70 percent of Utah teachers work under a master agreement.

ILLINOIS

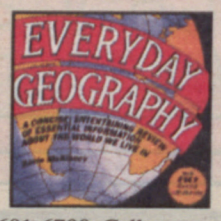
In Naperville, the "Make Sense/Cents for Kids" program has shown that even pennies can make a difference. School employees volunteer to have each paycheck rounded down to the nearest dollar (or, the more generous, down to the nearest five dollar mark). District bus drivers have so far proved to be the most generous. Twenty grants of around $500 each have funded scholarships and teaching projects throughout the district.

RESOURCES

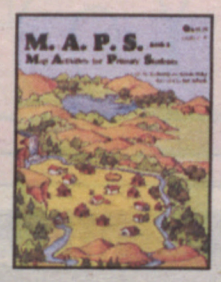
Free or Inexpensive

GEOGRAPHY

Everyday Geography. Kevin McKinney. A former magazine editor offers a concise, entertaining view of the world. Included are country-by-country descriptions of topography, climate, nature resources, history, culture, maps, and illustrations. Single copies cost $8.95 + $2.50 s&h. Write Contemporary Books at Two Prudential Plaza, Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601-6700. Call 312/540-4500; FAX 312/540-4687.



M.A.P.S.: Map Activities for Primary Students. Robby and Bonnie Risby. Teaches map skills, to grades 2 through 4 through stories set in a mystical medieval village. $6.95 each, plus $2 s&h for under 20 copies; 10% off orders for more than 20 copies. Dandy Lion Publications, P.O. Box 190, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. 800/776-8032.



SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY

Teaching About Haiti. Network of Educators on the Americas. A 40-page teaching guide aimed at developing understanding of the island nation. Grade 6 through adults. Single copies $4; inquire for bulk rates at NECA, 1118 22nd St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037; 202/429-0137.

HEALTH

Smoke-free Class of 2000 (seventh-grade package). Exciting, interactive tobacco-use prevention curriculum. Contains a 10-minute video featuring teens who have created change in their communities, plus posters, teaching guides, and information on a national letter-writing contest. $5.50. Contact the American Cancer Society (800/ACS-2345), American Heart Association (800/AHA-USA1), American Lung Association (800/LUNG-USA), or Smoke-free national office (800/562-4447).

SAFETY

Libros de Recursos/Learn Not to Burn. National Fire Protection Association. Reproducible activity sheets to teach 14 fire safety lessons to children K-3. Includes many group activities. Set of four books is $18.25. Publication number LNTB-RS (Spanish); LNTB-R (English). To order set, call 800/344-3555.

ASTRONOMY

Skywatch: Eyes-On Activities for Getting To Know the Stars, Planets, and Galaxies. Peter Lancaster-Brown. An exciting introduction to astronomy that includes star charts, planet-spotting timetables, sky maps, and a schedule for expected meteor showers. Also contains a history of astronomy, facts about stars, comets, asteroids, and meteors. $7.95 + $3 s&h. Write to Sterling Publishing Co., 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016-8810. 800/848-1186

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6-12). Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. Written by former classroom teachers, this guide will help you combat sexual harassment in your school. Includes core lessons, reproducible handouts, homework ideas, and background teaching notes, all pilot-tested extensively in middle and high schools. 116 pp. NEA member price: $15.95 (reg. price: $19.95). NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516; 800/229-4200; FAX 203/933-5276.

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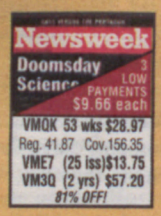

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RESOURCES

TV Tips

Turner Pics

In Search of Dr. Seuss—*TNT, Sunday, November 6, check local listings for time.* Robin Williams and Kathy Najimy head a cast of celebrities in this salute to the life and work of Theodor Geisel, creator of so many beloved characters and stories.

The Invisible People—*CNN, Sunday, November 6, check local listings for time.* This one-hour special offers an in-depth, region-by-region examination of contemporary issues of Native American life.

The Secret Garden—*ABC, Saturday, November 5, 11:30-1 p.m. ET.* This animated, musical version of a classic Victorian tale kicks off a new quarterly series of original movies made especially for children.

The Great Depression—*PBS, Tuesdays, November 8, 15, 22, 29, 10 p.m. ET.* This documentary series looks at the lives of Americans who struggled to survive in the economic turmoil brought on by the 1929 stock market crash.

Assignment Discovery: Goals 2000 Satellite Town Meetings—*The Discovery Channel, Friday, November 11, 9-10 a.m. ET.* A special program for teachers featuring a national dialogue among teachers, parents, students, and policy leaders.

Killer Quake!—*PBS, Tuesday, November 15, 8-9 p.m. ET.* NOVA probes the 1994 Northridge/Los Angeles earthquake, following scientists' efforts to understand this quake and the seismic pressures that have created new faults. Nova specials are available to schools. Call 800/828-WGBH.

TLC Elementary School: Stories from American History—*The Learning Channel, Tuesday, November 29, 4-5 p.m. ET.* This award-winning program features portrayals of real American cowboys—who were often Black, Hispanic, and female—as well as stories about Native Americans, the Gold Rush, and the Amish.

Ben Osborne/BBC Enterprises

Antarctica: Life in the Freezer—*TNT, check local listings for dates, times.* This six-hour, special series of National Geographic Explorer documentaries ventures into the wildest, coldest, and most isolated continent on Earth. The series features never-before-filmed scenes of the region's wildlife and landscape.

Buena Vista Television

Bill Nye the Science Guy—*PBS, Monday-Friday, check local listings for time.* This scientist/comedian (photo, left) proves that science is not only exciting and educational, but fun,too,in this lively series that looks at everything from gravity to garbage.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a computerized clearinghouse of children's television and radio programming in Washington, D.C.

Teacher TV

Don't forget to tune into *Teacher TV*, the weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and The Learning Channel. *Teacher TV* airs Sunday afternoons, 12:30-1 p.m. ET. Here's a list of upcoming episodes.

November 6: Overlooked Students
November 13: Shared Decision-Making
November 20: Sexual Harassment and Schools
November 27: Effective Discipline Strategies
December 4: Integrating Technology

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DOES YOUR SCHOOL WELCOME PARENTS?

The welcome mat may be out, but is your school telling parents in other, more subtle—perhaps unintentional—ways that they should stay away?

Parent Angela Henderson is a familiar sight at Williams Elementary, where she helps teacher Melissa Ludwick.

Parents want good schools. Schools are better when parents are involved. That's a simple correlation but one that can easily go askew if schools turn off parents and discourage their participation.

Take this quick quiz to see if your school may be discouraging—consciously or inadvertently—parent involvement.

➤ Does that traditional sign at your building entrance have warmth, or does it curtly demand that "All visitors must report to the office"?

➤ Do communications to parents go out only in English when parents speak other languages?

➤ When talking with parents, do staff use education jargon rather than words the lay person can understand?

➤ How about body language: Do staff invite parents into their classrooms or block the entrance and discourage parents from entering?

➤ Does your school tend to see parents as fundraisers rather than active participants in their children's education?

How did your school do? These questions all address concerns that school groups such as parent-teacher organizations say can lead to parent turnoff.

"We've come to realize," says Florida PTA President Kay Luzier, a fourth grade teacher in Port Orange, "that to educate the whole child, we must work together with the child's family. The job is too great for us to do alone."

Luzier's own organization, the National PTA, is doing its part by conducting many leadership conferences throughout the country for parents on how to communicate with school staff. Luzier notes that in Florida, PTA membership is up to 350,000, a 20,000 increase over last year.

This increased parent awareness presents a real window of opportunity for teachers, but parents need direction, she notes. Many of them don't know where to start.

"Parents can help us on many levels. Ultimately they can become child advocates—a voice for teachers beyond school walls," Luzier continues. Today, for instance, many PTAs have a nonpartisan specialist who keeps parents apprised of legislative issues affecting education.

The key word is *partnership*, says Kelly Peaks Horner, past president of Virginia's Fairfax Education Association. But, she notes, for teachers who chose their profession in large part because they like working by themselves and calling the shots, it can be intimidating to have parent partners.

These teachers have to remember, says Horner, that, like a doctor in the operating room, they can still practice their profession while working in unison with parents.

One school that's working in partnership with parents is Williams Elementary in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Every month the school holds Family Night, a time when parents, teachers, and students can mingle together while participating in activities like ping pong and karaoke singing.

Not only does everyone have fun, but the casual atmosphere encourages parents and teachers to socialize informally. The tone of the evening, atypical of most parent-teacher conferences, lays the groundwork for a solid relationship.

Williams also sponsors workshops that show parents how to help their kids with schoolwork. And last year the school went all out with its Testbuster campaign,

RESOURCES

The following books are all available from the NEA Professional Library:

Empowering At-Risk Families During the Early Childhood Years by Kevin J. Swick and Stephen B. Graves, 1993. $16.95. Stock No. 0366-7-00-F. Empathetic intervention can help a young child's family break the cycle of factors placing them at-risk.

Parents and Schools: From Visitors to Partners. Rebecca Crawford Burns, Editor. 1993. $11.95. Stock No. 1856-7-00-F. Focus on several areas, including communication technology, parents as co-decision makers and advocates, the home-school partnership, and effective parent involvement pratices.

Teachers and Parents: An Adult-to-Adult Approach by Dorothy Rich, 1987, $10.95. Stock No. 0277-6-00-F. How to bridge the gap between home and school.

To order any of the above books, contact NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT (800/229-4200, FAX 203/933-5276). To order through NEA Online, keyword to NEA Prof Library, click on How to Order, and fill in the information requested. Add $2.50 p&h for orders up to $14.50. Call for additional information.

which,
among other things, promoted the idea of making fourth grade standardized testing a family event.

Teacher Melissa Ludwick explains: "We didn't think that parents' only role should be receiving their kids' test scores. We wanted to familiarize them with the whole process, involve them from beginning to end."

In individual and group sessions, parents learned why it's important that their kids do well on the tests. Teachers explained how parents could help their kids by seeing that they got well-balanced meals, encouragement, and a good night's rest before the test day. Teachers and parents communicated by phone before and after the test.

The fourth graders did well, notes Ludwick. They were also encouraged by their own skits that offered test-taking hints like how not to be nervous and how to organize time. The school choir even sang a motivational song for them.

Nationally, parent involvement is getting top billing from the Department of Education and its secretary, Richard Riley.

In announcing the formation of a coalition to spearhead a parent involvement effort, Riley recently cited a new U.S. Department of Education study, "Strong Families, Strong Schools."

The report suggests ways that schools can encourage family involvement. These include providing free transportation and child care, hiring home-school coordinators to develop parent involvement programs, using the latest technologies—such as voice mail—to communicate to parents after school hours, scheduling evening and weekend meetings and before school conferences to accommodate working parents, and creating family resource centers.

Despite all the proven benefits, working with parents can sometimes be difficult. Some parents arrive at school with emotional baggage from their own classroom days. Others have tunnel vision where their child is concerned.

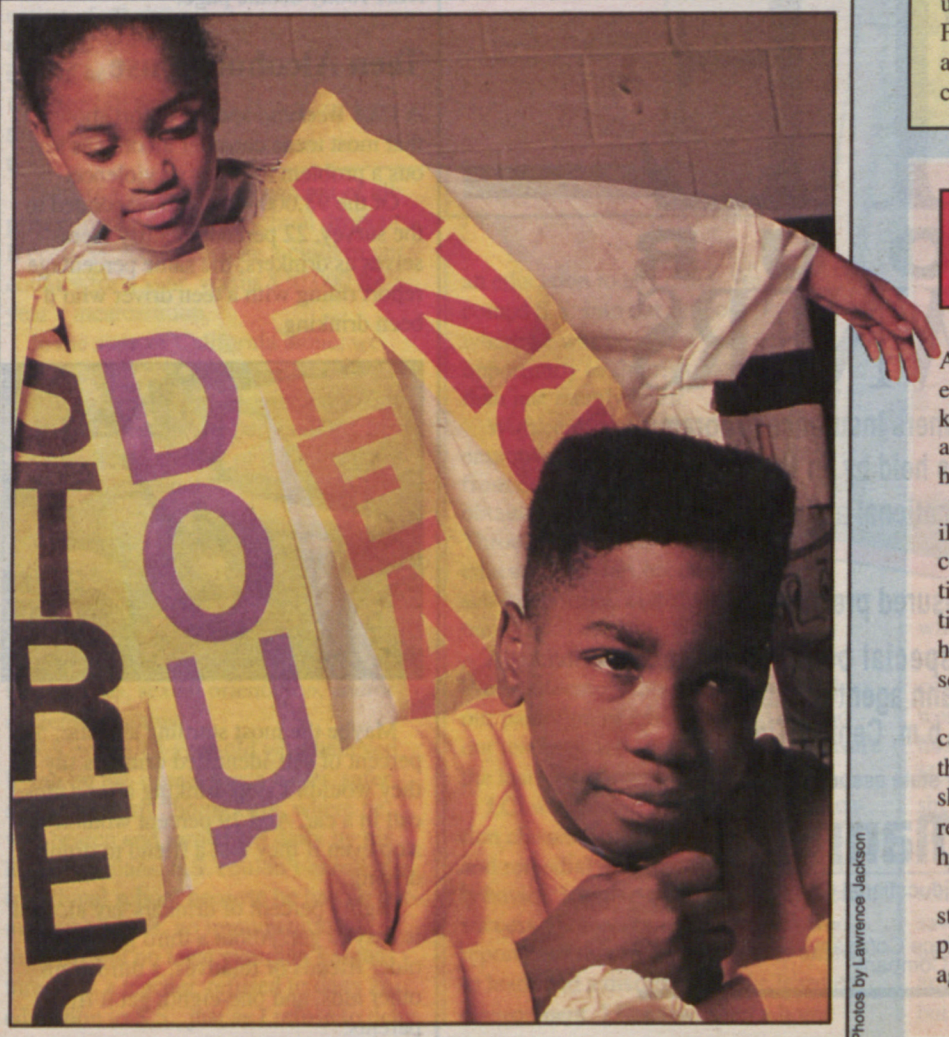
"If a child isn't successful in school, sometimes parents are understandably defensive," says Florida's Kay Luzier. "Parents and teachers should be concerned about finding solutions rather than assigning blame when students have problems.

"There's always room for both parents and school employees to move toward the middle. We must never lose the attitude of partnership."

—Diane Dismuke

Vicky Astheimer, a parent of a Williams' fourth grader, volunteers in the classroom several times a month.

(Below left) Students put on a play about getting over test anxiety. Both parents and teachers work with the kids to prepare them for testtaking.



Photos by Lawrence Jackson

New Report: As Kids Age, Parent Interest In School Wanes

A recent study concludes that it's easier to involve parents when their kids are in elementary school than after they move on to junior high and high school.

The study on the American family—titled "Running in Place" and conducted by the research organization Child Trends—finds that by the time kids reach high school, almost half of all parents stay away from all school activities.

Parents' interest in their kids education starts out pretty high during the elementary grades. The study shows 73 percent of students at age 8 report their parents are moderately or highly involved in their education.

That percentage stays fairly constant for several years, then begins to plummet—to 67 percent for students, aged 12, 57 percent for students aged 13, then 50 percent for students aged 18-20.

To increase involvement by parents of high schoolers, the study recommends that high schools ensure that at least one teacher knows each family and student well, and offer school-family activities for students who are not college-bound.

Other highlights of the study:

- Mothers who work outside the home are just as active in their children's school lives as mothers who are full-time homemakers.
- Students reporting low parent involvement come from families in which parents have lower education and income levels.

You can order this study by sending a $15 check to Child Trends, Inc., 4301 Connecticut Ave., Suite 100, Washington, DC 20008.

TRENDS

Nuclear Division

Ozzie and Harriet don't live here anymore.

New Census Bureau data show that only half of the nation's children live in traditional, nuclear families.

Different kinds of families are taking their place. Overall, about 24 percent of children live in single-parent families, 15 percent in step-families—often called "blended families"—and 2 percent with their grandparents.

But the statistics vary greatly by race and ethnicity. For instance, nearly half of Black children live in single-parent families, compared with 31 percent of Hispanic children and 19 percent of white children.

In addition, the survey reveals that more than half—56 percent—of white kids live in nuclear families, compared with 38 percent of Hispanic kids and 26 percent of Black kids.

Room at the Top

Women now hold 36.5 percent of all public elementary school principalships; 11 percent of secondary school top jobs. Progress, yes. Equality? Not quite.

The percentage of principals who are women is up from 21 percent in 1984 to 30 percent in 1990, according to the latest figures from the National Center for Education Statistics. Overall, that's a 43 percent increase over the six-year time period—and nothing to sneeze about.

Still, most principals are teachers first, and three-quarters of all teachers are women. Why don't more women teachers move into administrative roles?

"Such questions are not answerable by the data alone," the NCES report states, calling for more research. If you've got a theory, please send it along to *NEA Today* Letters (see page 38 for details).

Setting Limits

What do Atlanta, Dallas, Hartford, Newark, and Phoenix have in common?

They're among a growing number of cities and communities that have established curfews for their children.

Most of the laws require that kids aged 16 and younger be off the streets by 11 p.m. if they have school the next day, and by 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday.

The punishments for curfew violations run the gamut. Most provide a warning for first-time violations. After that, the penalties get a lot tougher. One 14-year-old from suburban Chicago went out to buy a Twinkie after 10 p.m. on a weekday and was stopped by police. The punishment: a fine and 36 hours of community service.

So far, Hawaii is the only state to establish a statewide curfew. There, youths 16 and under are banned from the streets after 10 p.m. weekdays unless accompanied by parents. Florida lawmakers just passed a local option curfew law. Many observers think the whole curfew idea will end up in a Supreme Court test case, but so far the high court has sidestepped the issue.

Look for two NEA members to square off on the curfew issue on the December *NEA Today* debate page.

Teen Alcohol Abuse

A *USA Weekend* special report shows that most teens consider alcohol as serious a problem as drugs or violence.

Of the 93,000 kids who responded to the survey, 22 percent identify themselves as drinkers; the same percentage report riding with a teen driver who'd been drinking.

Maybe the most startling statistic: 52 percent of self-identified drinkers say they wouldn't stop drinking after a close call in a car. And 29 percent wouldn't stop even if they lost a friend to drunk driving.

Eighty percent of drinkers say alcohol is easy to get. About a third get it from older friends or relatives, a third from other kids, and one-eighth get it from parents.

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SOUNDING BOARD

Making A Difference

By Sandra McBrayer, 1994 National Teacher of the Year

Public education is being attacked on all fronts, and teachers are often the target. But we aren't the problem. What I find across this country is that the ills of society are the problem, and they happen to be knocking at the classroom door.

If you build a school in the middle of the desert, you'd expect your classroom to become hot by mid-morning and would prepare to counteract the effects of the heat. Yet, in our society, we are building schools without addressing the social milieu within which they are located. We seem surprised that violence, drugs, teen pregnancy, hunger, poverty, and death follow the path to our school campuses.

We as educators must work within a budding microcosm of this society. We're not immune from the forces that tear at our social fabric. But we have a choice. We can accept the role of victim and say we are not responsible. Or we can focus on not who's responsible but on who's response-able.

It's not a matter of pointing fingers, it's a matter of taking action to care for, protect, and educate all children. As educators we have the power, the passion, the knowledge, and the skills to ensure success in this most critical enterprise.

As educators, we must not merely adopt but promote a philosophy that guarantees all children the right to an education that is equitable and of the highest standards.

We can accept the role of victim, point fingers, and say we aren't responsible. But if we do, who will care for, protect, and educate our children?

If we don't invest in the education of all children, we will instead be faced with the bill for their incarceration.

Statistics show that 85 percent of all prison inmates are high school dropouts. It costs $4,500 to educate a child in our country for a year, versus $30,000 for a year's incarceration.

In the state of California alone, we have built 28 prisons and jails in the last 20 years—and only one university. Education can prevent the perpetuation of our two-tiered society of the educated and the uneducated.

While teaching in my own class for homeless youth in San Diego, I found children who'd been denied an education due to their socioeconomic status, residential circumstances, lack of immunization records, sexual orientation, and/or citizenship status.

S.S. was a 15-year-old who believed living on the streets was a better, safer option than his "home" life, where he was beaten and tormented daily by his legal guardians. S.S. couldn't enroll in a traditional school because he had no permanent address, no immunization records, and no legal guardian's signature. I, as a teacher, refused to deny an education to S.S., just as I refuse to deny an education to any child. We welcomed S.S. into our school, where he was provided with an opportunity to flourish, rather than just merely learn.

With continual support and empowerment, S.S. graduated from our high school and obtained gainful employment. Through an equitable, quality education, he has become a self-supporting, contributing community member.

All children have the ability to learn. We as educators must modify and adjust our paradigm of education and expand our teaching and learning styles to ensure the learning success of all students.

J.C. was placed in behavior modification classes, special education classes, and remedial programs because of her behavior, language, and lack of academic success. At the age of 13, she received a report card that said that she was unable to learn and a disruption to the learning environment. J.C. came from a home where physical and sexual abuse were commonplace. The only models she had were those who didn't believe in education and gave her no guidance or support. Her family members often told her that she was too stupid to learn and should give up on school.

When J.C. found her way to our school, she was hostile, negative, and saw no value in education. We did not judge J.C. but welcomed her with open arms. We did not look at where J.C. was but instead focused upon where she could go. J.C. came to us not knowing the alphabet and now takes pride in reading aloud, reinforcing our belief that all children can learn.

Photos by Bob Riha, Jr.

I want to tell you about another student I know personally. In the third grade she met the police. It was not a happy encounter—she was detained for trespassing on school property. She found out quickly that if you get taken home by the police, people get to know your name and attention is forthcoming. In the sixth grade, she was suspended from school because she disagreed with the rules. In ninth grade, she was in one or two fights and was again suspended.

A high school counselor wrote her a note that asked, "Why are you wasting our time?" Leaving school that day, she found herself offended and angry. Determined to prove her academic potential, she went on to graduate from high school. As a means of further proving herself, she made it through college. As she stood on a football field with 7,000 other graduates, she said to the young man next to her, "Boy, did I trick this school!" She still did not understand her true value or believe in her intelligence or personal power.

Today, as the 1994 National Teacher of the Year, she writes these words to prove that miracles happen in classrooms across this country. As I accepted a crystal apple from the President of the United States, a third grade teacher was probably saying to herself, "Who would have thought?" As I debated William Bennett live on CNN, a sixth grade teacher was probably musing, "I never knew."

That is the point of my message. We never do know who sits before us or where they can go. Only through education can we clear the many paths that lie before each and every student. We have the knowledge and the skills to unlock the closed doors that stand in the way of our children's development.

Our attitude is the key. Actions speak far louder than words. Our lessons and materials are an integral part of our schools. But it is our philosophy of teaching and our behavior that have the greatest impact on our students.

Educators play a crucial role in determining the future of our society. We must understand this responsibility and open our hearts and minds to all students. Their souls are in our hands.

Sandra McBrayer, the 1994 National Teacher of the Year, teaches homeless kids in San Diego, California. Approximately 50 students attend the school on any given day.

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The new kid at school says veggies are cool.

His name is Willie Munchright™ and he's the host of **What's On Your Plate.®** It's a program created by McDonald's® and the Society for Nutrition Education to help you teach your class all about eating right. The program includes a video of Willie's Public Service Announcements, as seen Saturday mornings on CBS, a leader guide with a colorful poster illustrating the Food Guide Pyramid and a student activity brochure.

Or you can choose **Healthy Growing Up,™** a group of lessons and activities for kids in kindergarten through third grade. They focus on self-esteem and fitness as well as nutrition, and have earned the support of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

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LEGAL TIMES

Books, Ghosts 'n Goblins

Continuing its attack on public schools, the religious right now claims that teachers are Satanists, hell-bent on forcing innocent children to practice witchcraft. Fortunately, the courts aren't buying it.

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble.
"Macbeth," Act IV, Scene I

There's trouble brewing in the schools.

Turning the tables on church-state separationists, the religious right has filed a series of lawsuits claiming that various public school districts have violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment by promoting witchcraft, which they call the religion of "Wicca."

How? By teaching witchcraft, requiring students to recite "Satanic chants," and sponsoring Halloween celebrations.

In three important decisions handed down this year, the courts have flatly rejected these claims.

In *Brown v. Woodland Joint Unified School District,* fundamentalist parents—supported by the American Family Association—sued a California school district alleging that use of the *Impressions* Reading Series in elementary school compelled their children "to practice the 'religion' of witchcraft in violation of the federal Establishment Clause."

In a decision announced on June 15, 1994, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit disagreed.

Impressions is a series of 59 books containing approximately 10,000 literary selections and suggested classroom activities.

According to the court, *Impressions* uses a "whole language" approach to reading instruction with the goal of "inducing children to read more quickly and with greater enthusiasm through the use of high quality literary selections."

The literary selections are followed by suggested learning activities, such as having children "compose rhymes and chants." Several of the selections discuss "the folklore of diverse cultures," including "charms, spells, wizards, and witches," and some of the activities have students "role-play sorcerers and witches and cast spells."

The parents claimed that, because the challenged selections "engage children in witchcraft rituals and cause them to pretend that they are witchcraft practitioners," the *Impressions* curriculum endorses and promotes Wicca.

What's worse, the parents argued, exposing their children to "witchcraft rituals" could lead to their involvement in demonic sects later in life.

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog.

Without deciding whether Wicca or witchcraft is a "religion" under the First Amendment, the Ninth Circuit upheld the school district's right to use the *Impressions* series.

The court emphasized that the objectionable passages "reflect a broad range of North American cultures and traditions," and the fact that students "discuss witches" or even "create poetic chants" doesn't mean they're practicing witchcraft or engaging in "religious rituals."

"If an Establishment Clause violation arose each time a student believed that a school practice either advanced or disapproved of a religion, school curricula would be reduced to the lowest common denominator, permitting each student to become a 'curriculum review committee' unto himself or herself," the court concluded.

Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing.

Also this year, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals rejected a similar challenge to the use of *Impressions* in a small Illinois school district.

The plaintiffs/parents in *Fleischfresser v. Directors of School District 200* claimed that the reading series promotes "religious concepts found in paganism and branches of witchcraft and Satanism" and requires students "to prepare and cast chants and spells and to practice being witches."

Nonsense, the court said. *Impressions* is nothing more than "a collection of exercises in 'make-believe' designed to develop and encourage the use of imagination and reading skills in children that are the staple of traditional public elementary school education....That this particular series relies on witches and goblins in a few stories to develop the children's minds," does not make it an establishment of religion, the court said.

The parents in *Fleischfresser* also claimed that use of *Impressions* violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment by "indoctrinat[ing] children in values directly opposed to their Christian beliefs by teaching tricks, despair, deceit, parental disrespect, and by denigrating Christian symbols and holidays."

Balderdash, said the court. The *Impressions* series serves the legitimate governmental functions of "providing quality public school education" and teaching "the value of tolerance of divergent political and religious views."

And it doesn't matter that the fundamentalist parents might be offended by some of the objectionable passages.

Quoting from a 45-year-old Supreme Court decision, the circuit court cautioned, "If we are to eliminate everything that is objectionable to any religious group or inconsistent with any of their doctrines, we will leave public schools in shreds."

For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

So what about school sponsorship of Halloween celebrations?

In 1986, NEA was named as a defendant in a federal, class-action lawsuit seeking to enjoin Halloween celebrations in Arkansas's public schools.

The plaintiffs in the case included an Arkansas minister, "all Christian children" in Arkansas, and "Jesus Christ." Named as co-defendants with NEA were the United States and Arkansas Departments of Education, the Communist Party, and "Satan."

Although the Eighth Circuit summarily affirmed the dismissal of that lawsuit, the issue was fully litigated in a different case decided earlier this year by the Florida District Court of Appeals.

The plaintiffs in *Guyer v. School Board of Alachua County* complained that the "depiction of witches, cauldrons, and brooms" in Halloween decorations placed in the county's public elementary schools, as well as the practice of "teachers dressing up as witches in black dresses and pointed hats" on October 31 each year, endorsed and promoted the religion of Wicca in violation of the Establishment Clause.

In rejecting the plaintiffs' challenge, the court noted that the contemporary Halloween celebration is a "secular event without religious connotations."

While it is fairly clear that the courts will uphold the use of the *Impressions* series and the celebration of Halloween against Establishment Clause challenges, that does not end the debate.

Opponents of public education still may be able to convince local school boards voluntarily to ban the reading series.

All the more reason why NEA members have to be vigilant and respond forcefully whenever censors come to town. Otherwise, "Macbeth" itself may be banned.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

NEWS TO USE

A Sound Investment

Praise for public schools from an unexpected source.

From a strictly financial standpoint, what's a better investment—public schools or private ones?

An extensive study by *Money* magazine says public ones.

An article in *Money's* October issue explains, as the title states plainly, "Why Private Schools Are Rarely Worth the Money."

While *Money* acknowledges the quality of many prep schools, the article notes that "few families can afford to spend $10,000 and up on tuition, nor should they, if a public school will do just as good a job."

And, after surveying 70 public and private schools, reporter Denise M. Topolnicki concludes that "you get the best value for your education dollars at a top public school."

Money magazine rated schools on teachers' qualifications, course offerings, class size, facilities, discipline problems, ethnic diversity, and cost.

Researchers spoke to administrators, visited 20 of the selected schools, and examined school records, state department of education reports, and public and private school information guides.

Among the survey findings:

➤ Students who attend the best public schools outperform most private school students.

➤ The best public schools offer a more challenging curriculum than most private schools.

➤ Public school class sizes are not larger than those in most private schools and are smaller than those in most Catholic schools.

➤ The average public school teacher has better academic qualifications than the average private school teacher.

"You get the best value for your education dollars at a top public school."
—*Money* magazine

"The best news to come out of *Money*'s survey of public and private schools across America," the article concludes, "was that, by and large, public schools are not lacking in experienced topnotch teachers, challenging courses, or an environment that is conducive to learning.

"What many public schools are lacking," it continues, "is a student body brimming with kids eager to take advantage of what the school has to offer.... Most teachers are dying for young, motivated minds to nurture. If they find an industrious student who is eager to learn, more often than not they will give him or her all of the personal attention that private tuition money could buy."

Check out the complete article, including an account of one couple's decision to stick with public schools, in *Money*'s October issue, pages 98-112.

Toward Certification

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards announces that assessments for the first two national teaching certificates—in Early Adolescence/English Language Arts and Early Adolescence/Generalist—are now available to experienced teachers of 11-15-year-olds.

National Board certification requires this year's candidates to do two things: compile school-site portfolios by April 28, 1995, and complete performance-based exercises at an assessment center over a two-day period in July 1995. Total cost is $975, of which $500 is payable with the application form, the remainder by March 3, 1995.

Applications must be postmarked by December 16, 1994. For more details and an application form, call the National Board at 800/532-1813.

Next month's cover story in *NEA Today* will carry the latest details about national certification.

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Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn

In 1977, Mary Oetzel was diagnosed with an environmental illness, resulting from "multiple chemical sensitivities." This spurred her to research environmental issues, and today she is president of Environmental Education and Health Services in Austin, Texas. Oetzel, the author of a chapter on radon and asbestos in NEA's Healthy School Handbook *(see box), spoke recently with* NEA Today *staff writer Victoria Lytle.*

What is radon?
Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that's found in varying amounts in rocks, soil, and underground water throughout the world. It's tasteless, odorless, and colorless.

How serious a health threat is it?
Radon is a known human carcinogen—it's second only to smoking as a cause of lung cancer. It's a silent killer, since people can't tell if they're being exposed. And its effects are more hazardous for children than adults.

Why is that?
Children are more sensitive to radon because their lungs are smaller and their respiratory rates are twice as high. Doctors say that, by the age of 10, a child receives twice the lung dose of an adult who's been exposed to radon for the same length of time.

How many deaths annually can be attributed to radon?
That's debatable, but major health organizations agree that radon causes thousands of deaths each year. Expert estimates range from 7,000 to 30,000 deaths a year. The figure used by the Environmental Protection Agency is 14,000.

What parts of the country have a high potential for radon?
In the northern states, particularly as you go northeast into Maine, there are significant pockets of high levels of radon. In the midwest, northern Iowa and Minnesota are considered high areas as are the Dakotas, Montana, and Idaho. Radon levels are lower in Washington and Oregon.

Should schools test for radon?
Since 1989, the EPA has recommended that all schools nationwide test for the presence of radon. This is especially important in areas that have a greater likelihood of finding radon, such as parts of the Northeast or upper Midwest. They're advised to screen for radon—that's the first step.

What is the Environmental Protection Agency doing about radon?
The EPA has a new map out that shows radon potential—high, medium, or low level—for each of the country's 3,141 counties. The agency also works with schools to find the best way to lessen radon exposure.

What if a school district's in a low potential radon area. Should it still test?
Absolutely! Schools located in the low potential areas may fail to test because the may feel reasssured that they're not at risk. They may in fact have pockets of radon even though they're in those low potential areas.

How can school employees test for radon?
There are several devices that schools use. Some of the simpler ones—such as the two-day charcoal canister—are available at local hardware stores. They may vary in accuracy, but they're still good screening devices.

There's also the alpha track detector, which measures exposures for about three months. Another device is the electric ion chamber, which is based on an electrostatic charge and gives an immediate reading. It's one that can be used over and over.

I'm sure the state radiation department would have a list of these screening devices as well as where to purchase them.

It's particularly important to test basements or first-floor rooms. The best time to check for radon is in the winter months when school buildings are closed up.

Once school employees determine a building has elevated levels, they should retest to make sure there are no inaccuracies. If there are elevated levels, they need to proceed with remediation techniques.

How do you find the state radiation department?
Every state radiation department should be listed in the phone book under state government. NEA's *Healthy School Handbook* (see box) includes a list of the radiation departments in every state and phone numbers for each of the 10 EPA regional offices. The indoor air quality office of each state, can also direct people to the state radiation department.

Are there really any acceptable levels of radon?
The EPA states that there's no threshold level for radon. In other words, there's no such thing as an acceptable level or a level where there are no health care risks.

A reasonable long-term goal is to lower indoor radon levels to the ambient levels in the air surrounding each building. That's approximately four picocuries per liter.

What should students know about radon?
They should understand what radon is and what health problems arise from radon exposure. The important thing we can pass on to students is that if they smoke and are exposed to excessive levels of radon, their risk of developing lung cancer is significantly higher than if they simply have excessive radon levels. Apparently the radon particles are attracted to the smoke and inhaled in greater quantities.

The Healthy School Handbook

Soon you'll have a brand-new resource to consult about environmental hazards and related issues.

The NEA Professional Library is about to publish *The Healthy School Handbook: Conquering the Sick Building Syndrome and other Environmental Hazards in and Around Your School,* a timely and comprehensive guide. Leading environmental scientists, physicians, engineers, and educators wrote the 23 chapters, which address the concerns of teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, and students.

Every chapter offers practical advice for dealing economically and non-toxically with such school-building problems as pests, odorous carpeting, toxic cleaning materials, and poor lighting. There's also information on complying with federal and state regulations regarding air quality, cafeteria food, chemical emissions, and scores of other environmental issues that affect every teacher, support person, and student.

The book is available after November 16, 1994 from the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT, 06516, 800/229-4200. Order before Dec. 1 and take $5 off the $21.95 regular price (shipping and handling extra).

People

Bill McClain

The Bike Man

"Every kid should have a bike," says **Glen Fitzsimmons**, a plant engineer in Eagle Point, Oregon, and he's doing more than his share to make it happen.

Over the past five years, Fitzsimmons has acquired, repaired and given away more than 500 bikes to kids whose families can't afford them.

Fitzsimmons fashions many of the bikes from parts salvaged from the city dump. Others are discards that folks who've learned about his hobby leave in his carport. Still others are donations from folks who want to help—like the retiring bicycle dealer in northern California who gave the entire contents of his store to Fitzsimmons.

In his two-story barn that serves as a makeshift warehouse, Fitzsimmons studiously repairs each bike, adds a coat of paint, and turns out children's treasures by the dozens.

The repair work comes easy to Fitzsimmons. "I've been a mechanic since I was a young boy," he says.

For those kids and parents who don't have Fitzsimmons's mechanical skills, the Eagle Point Education Association member has even conducted an after-school minicourse on maintenance and repair, covering everything from flat tires to faulty brakes.

Fitzsimmons's contact with the kids doesn't end when they ride off. "Most of these kids believe I've given them a 500,000-mile warranty," says Fitzsimmons.

"So as soon as they get a flat tire, they're back in my shop. And when there are new kids in town who don't have bikes, my kids will lead them straight to me."

Jeff Schultz

Life Guide

Twenty years ago, when NEA-Retired member **Don Schulz** was teaching fourth grade, he decided he'd like to work closely with one child individually. So he became a Big Brother.

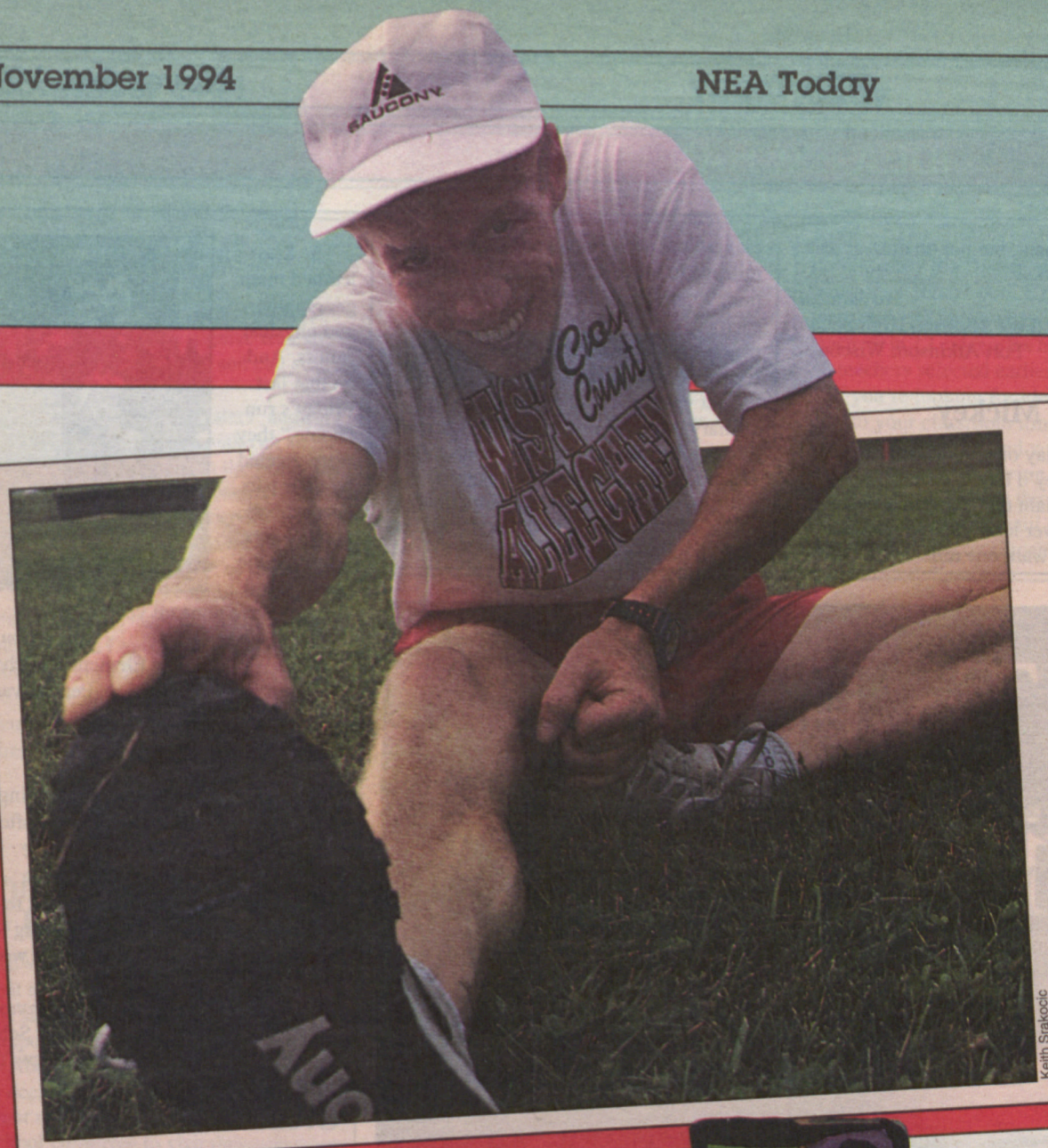
Since then, the Anchorage, Alaska resident has mentored three boys, including his current "little brother," Scott Johnson (pictured here).

Now Schulz has been named National Big Brother of Year by the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America organization. He was recognized earlier this year by President Clinton in a special White House ceremony.

Though all three boys that Schulz mentored were being raised by single mothers, Schulz—who isn't married and doesn't have any children—says he never tried to be a surrogate parent. But establishing regular contact proved crucial to developing successful relationships with his kids. "You have to be dependable," he notes, "so the child knows you're going to be there."

Schulz has actively encouraged each boy in his school work. He was especially proud when his first little brother received a bachelor's degree in elementary education earlier this year. His second little brother is studying broadcast production at college.

"Boys have their peaks and valleys—especially during their adolescent years," says Schulz. "The important thing is that someone be there to see them through it all."



Keith Srakocic

Qualifying Time

Jim Hamilton wants to go for the gold. And the science teacher, cross country coach, and assistant track coach from West Allegheny Senior High in Imperial, Pennsylvania has got a legitimate shot at it. He's qualified to compete in the Olympic Marathon Trials to be held in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1996.

Hamilton finished 12th in a field of 2,500 runners in the Pittsburgh Marathon May 1. His time—2:21:47—is fast enough to qualify for the Olympics, and it's just eight minutes or so off the time that he believes it would take to be an Olympic competitor. Hamilton, who runs 13-18 miles a day, is sponsored by Saucony, an athletic shoe manufacturer.

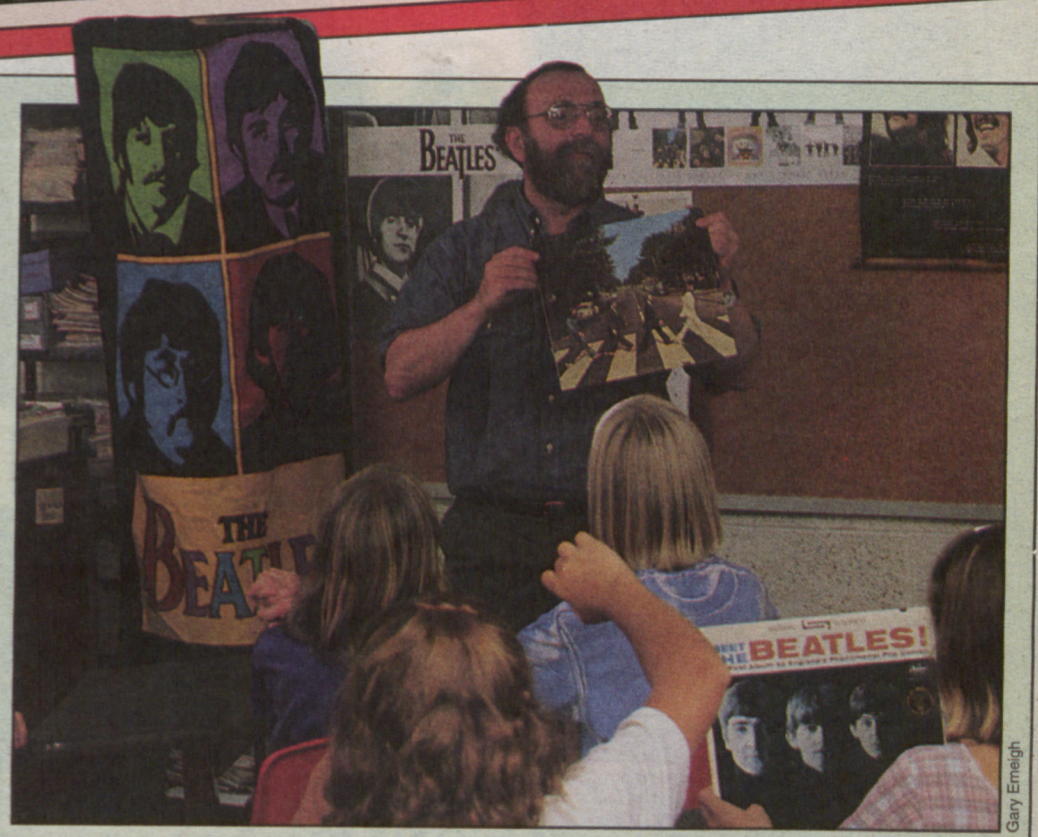
Hamilton, 25, says runners reach their peak at age 30, so he figures he'll improve.

"Running is an energizing way to start the school day," says Hamilton, "and I love the competition involved in races."

A Good Laugh

Bob Manganaro does good when people laugh at him. In his gingerbread costume, the school psychologist from Hope Valley, Rhode Island strolled the NEA Representative Assembly in New Orleans last July to publicize NEA Rhode Island's Children's Fund.

Manganaro has also formed a clown troupe with three high school students. Together they perform skits on drug and alcohol awareness or environmental issues at local elementary and high schools. "You can really get kids to focus on your message," Manganaro says, "because everybody loves a clown."



Gary Emeigh

Lessons from Liverpool

Ask Delaware teacher **Joel Glazier** about the legendary Beatles and you're likely to get an earful and an eyeful.

Glazier, a reading specialist at Middleburg Middle School in Delaware City, is a fan, collector, and historian when it comes to the Fab Four. "They're a constant source of inspiration *and* lessons," says Glazier, who's even taught classes about the legendary band.

"I've met all four Beatle members and even made an occasional pilgrimage to Liverpool. I always tell my students that this band mirrored the changes of my generation in their music and their lifestyle."

During the last 10 years, Glazier has put his Beatle passion to work for peace. At Beatle conventions across the country, Glazier's been instrumental in raising funds for a "peace forest" in Israel, planted in honor of the late John Lennon.

IDEA EXCHANGE

Grade A Incentive

To encourage parents to come to Back-to-School night and parent-teacher conferences, I give each who attends a small brochure that includes a coupon good for one free grade of *A* on any student assignment.

I mention the coupon to my students just prior to these events, and they enthusiastically encourage their parents to attend. The coupons may be used to replace a poor grade or in lieu of turning in an assignment, but not on quiz or test grades. It works!

Pat Mitchell
Fort Atkinson High School
Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin

Chasing Mickey

On the first day of school, I ask my third graders if they'd like to run to Disney World. I explain that together we can do it and yet never leave the playground.

We jog or walk one mile around the playground each Friday and accumulate mileage to move us closer to our destination, 995 miles on the map. I also coax each kid to bike, walk, even skate outside of school and provide a parent-signed record of that mileage.

Last year we completed our run by January 30, and I rewarded the kids with a party. Then we continued running, from Orlando to New Orleans and on to Atlanta, where we caught an imaginary plane to Washington, D.C. and continued the run back to our school.

The kids learned math, geography, and physical fitness. And on that last Friday's run "home," they were greeted by their parents' cheers and banners. After all, the parents said, the kids were gone all year!

Zan Bramley
Gayman Elementary School
Danboro, Pennsylvania

Clip Art

I teach art to K-3 students. Since using a paper clip, no matter how large, is often difficult for these youngsters, I have them clip their work together with a spring-type clothespin instead. The result may be bulky, but it saves me having to clip together all the work and does wonders for the kids' self-esteem.

Shelly Lirotowitz
Margetts Elementary School
Monsey, New York

Great Attributes

When I was teaching high school language arts, I posted rules and advice for students in the form of famous quotations. This led to a class discussion of literary interpretation and sources.

A sample of the quotations I used:

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be." —Shakespeare

"No one knows what it is that he can do till he tries." —Syrus

"A fool always finds a greater fool to admire him." —Nickolas Boileau

By using a dictionary of quotations, any teacher can adapt this idea.

Guy Smith
Retired
Brookneal, Virginia

Send your easily adaptable, classroom-tested ideas for this column via NEA Online (keyword: NEA Today), or write to Idea Exchange, NEA Today, *1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.*

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IDEA EXCHANGE

What's My Line?

My kindergarten students are always thrilled when they recognize teachers and other school employees and can address them by name.

To develop the youngsters' auditory discrimination skills, I make an audiotape with greetings from the principal, teachers, school nurse, teacher aides, custodian, bus driver, and secretaries. The children learn to identify each by name, after listening to the tape of their voices.

A variation of this activity increases listening skills and helps break down stereotypes: I make an audio tape of persons talking about their jobs, being careful to use nontraditional participants—a female firefighter, for example. The children must then identify the occupation.

Florence A. Riker
Lakeview School
Denville, New Jersey

Purple Dots & A Pat on the Back

We've initiated a program at our school that allows teachers to share ideas and at the same time provides them with peer support.

About once a month, Purple Dot Day is declared. On that day, teachers who want to put out the welcome mat for any school employee to visit their classrooms display a purple dot in their window. (Purple is one of our school colors.)

Then, during planning periods, teachers and others can go into these classrooms as observers. It's become tradition for visitors to leave notes of encouragement if they like what they see.

Teresa Sewell
Samuel Jackman Middle School
Sacramento, California

A Stretch Limo For Students

At the end of each school year, I reward my physical education students who've been consistently good. For several years, I threw a party for these kids. But after I received $25,000 as winner of a Miliken National Educator Award, I decided to do more.

Ninety-six students were on my

"model student" list last June. I put all their names into a hat, then asked my principal to draw out four. For those four, I funded a six-hour fun spree one Sunday: a stretch limo picked them up and took them first to a movie, then to a shopping center where each was given $50 to spend (or save). To finish the day, the limo took them to a local restaurant for dinner.

Rewarding good behavior ensures that good students aren't penalized because of bad class behavior.

Barbara Chiles
Westmer Junior High School
Joy, Illinois

A Disney Do

Live from...Washington, D.C., it's...the fifth annual American Teacher Awards, presented by the Disney Channel on November 16 at 7 p.m. ET. Entertainment stars will present awards to top teachers in 12 categories from a group of 36 teachers selected earlier this year.

If you're looking for ideas that might fit into your classroom itinerary, these teachers have them, and you'll see highlights of their work during the show. If you have cable TV but don't get the Disney Channel, you can still see this show in its free encore on December 2.

Send your easily adaptable, classroom-tested ideas for this column via NEA Online (keyword: NEA Today), or write to Idea Exchange, NEA Today, *1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.*

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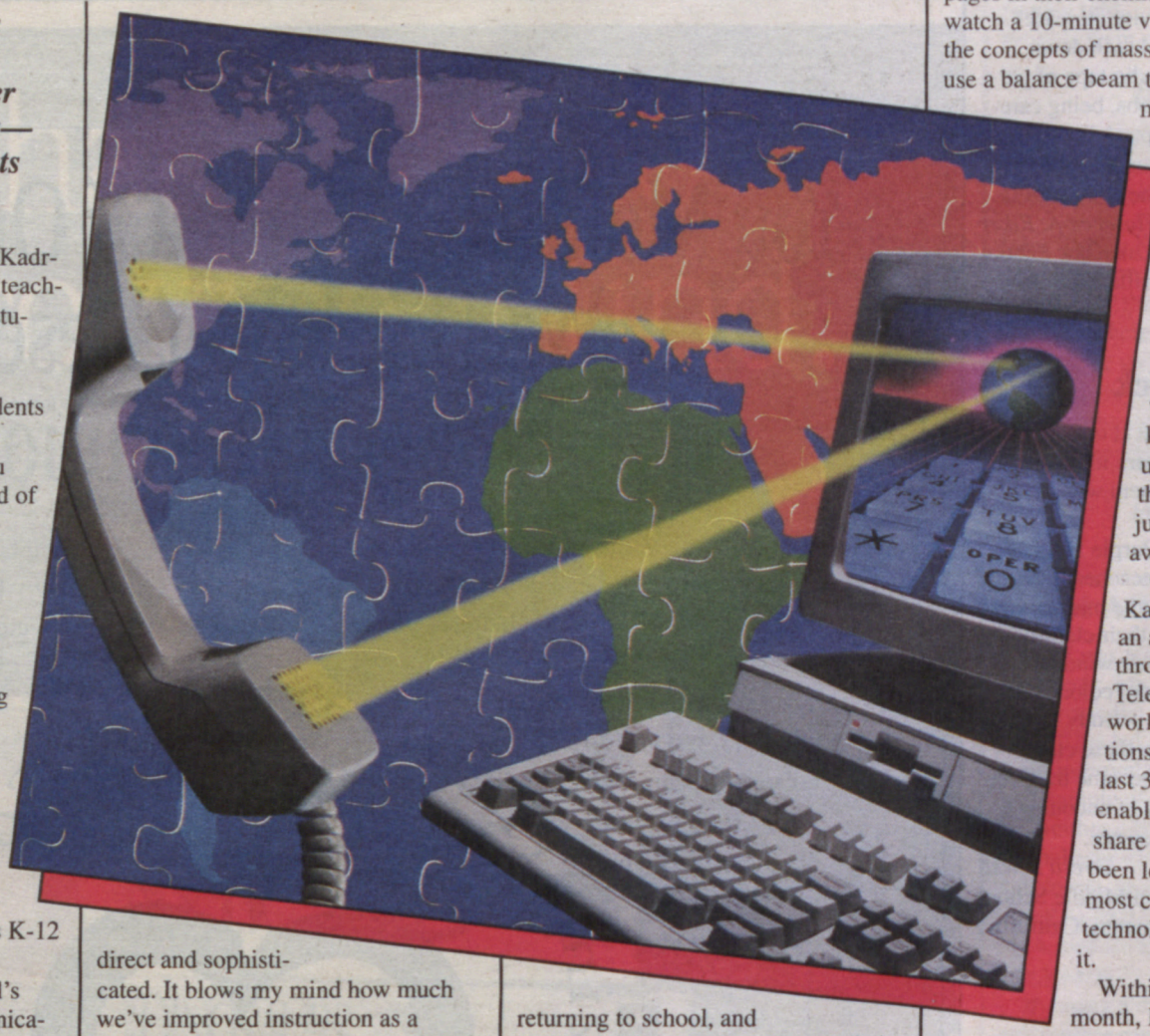
Online

NEA members using technology to improve education

Mind Over Miles

This Alaska pipeline has nothing to do with oil. Instead, a science teacher pumps chemistry lessons—via computer—to students all over the state.



Chemistry teacher Linda Kadrlik has a teeny problem teaching lab experiments to students who are in their homes hundreds of miles away.

"When you consider that students are mixing chemicals without supervision in their kitchen, you have to be careful about the kind of experiments you require," she says.

No matter, Kadrlik adds. "There are plenty of hands-on activities you can have them do with safe and simple household products like vinegar and baking soda."

Kadrlik is one of 24 teachers at Alyeska Central School, known as Alaska's Centralized Correspondence School. Located in Juneau, this school is an accredited, public school serving 1,675 students in grades K-12 located all over the state.

In the early years—the school's been open since 1939—communication between teachers and their distant students was primarily through the mail. Today's technology has changed all that.

"Communication with students has improved dramatically from 15 years ago when many families didn't even have a telephone," says Kadrlik.

"Now that we're going to be using e-mail and faxes more frequently, communication is getting even more direct and sophisticated. It blows my mind how much we've improved instruction as a result."

Teachers at the school—members of Alyeska Central School Education Association—design, produce materials for, and teach the school's 101 courses.

Their audience has grown by leaps and bounds since newer technologies have become more affordable. The students are primarily kids isolated in rural areas, teen mothers, dropouts returning to school, and children in families that educate their children at home.

At the beginning of the semester, Kadrlik sends her 22 chemistry students books, balance beams, chemicals, videotapes, and other resources. Because computers are such effective learning tools, Kadrlik arranges to provide a few extra computers that the school owns to families that don't have their own.

To personalize relations with students and introduce herself, Kadrlik usually tapes a video of herself in the school's studio at the beginning of the semester and sends it out.

What's an average "class" like? Kadrlik says students might read five pages in their chemistry study guide, watch a 10-minute videotape about the concepts of mass and weight, then use a balance beam to determine the mass of a beaker of calcium hydroxide.

At the end of the lesson, they turn to questions for review and practice, answer them, and check their work against the key. If they don't understand something, Kadrlik is just a phone call away.

Once a month, Kadrlik schedules an audio conference through the Alaska Teleconference Network. The conversations, which usually last 30 minutes, enable the kids to share what they've been learning. As with most communications technology, they enjoy it.

Within the next month, Kadrlik expects to get most students online, so they'll be able to send in some of their homework via e-mail.

"I'm excited about getting e-mail for my students," says Kadrlik. "The kids who've tried it so far love using it so much I have to remind them it costs money.

"But," she adds, "their enthusiasm for learning is worth every penny."

—Victoria Lytle

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TIPS FOR USING NEA ONLINE

Terry Shaffer, *special education teacher*
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

I recently came across a message, "Pen Pals for High School Students," in the special education folder on NEA Online's Teaching and Learning message board. I contacted the author and set up a multi-state penpal forum for our students who will now have an opportunity to make friends with kids across the country—maybe even around the world. Explore the Teaching and Learning message board and exchange ideas with colleagues. To access the T&L board, click the "Go To " menu, then click "Keyword" and type "NEA Teaching." Click T&L message board.

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RESEARCH CLUES

'A Trip to Hell'

How do you handle hostile students? And why are they hostile in the first place? Analysis of this case study provides some clues.

By Robert McNergney

The scene: a pull-out Spanish bilingual class of 13 Latino fifth graders in an inner-city school where the main cultural group is Asian. The classroom's in chaos; some kids are screaming obscenities at each other over the dull roar of talking. A couple more are crying. All refuse to speak Spanish. What would you do?

The teacher depicted in the case entitled "A Trip to Hell," responded by muddling through a game of 20 questions and giving what he thought was exciting homework based on students' own experiences. The students weren't buying.

As the days passed, the teacher was continually disappointed by the reaction to what he considered creative academic instruction, so he resorted to dittos, basal readers, and heavy doses of counseling (for the students).

He encouraged individuals to help him plan the lessons. He "gently but firmly" restated his expectations, sent "validation letters" to students, and told them how intelligent they were.

Maybe the teacher really improved classroom life; maybe he only succeeded in making it look better by establishing order and watering down the curriculum. But let's set that issue aside and explore why the students were so angry and hostile in the first place.

Richard Piper, director of California Learning Designs, Inc., says the case is an example of Paulo Freire's "horizontal violence," or the violence of oppressed people against one another.

He sees in the children the classic characteristics of the oppressed: fatalistic attitudes, self-depreciation, self-distrust, and magical belief in the power of the oppressor. These students are simply acting a script society has written.

Maybe, but there could be other reasons this situation occurred. The beauty of cases is that no one has proprietary rights to the "correct" interpretation.

Amado Padilla of Stanford contends that the underlying cause is one of failing to recognize differences among individuals. "I also worry about the lack of attention to the vast heterogeneity that exists among Hispanics. To be informed that the students are all Latino is, I suppose, better than not knowing anything about the students, but just barely."

Indeed, educators know that students who share a certain characteristic such as ethnicity are still different from one another in important ways.

Sometimes within-group variation is expressed as a statistic called the "standard deviation" (s.d.), or the average difference from the group mean. When the s.d. is large, group members differ considerably on that measure, and probably differ in other important ways too.

If we read the case carefully, we see that some of the students in the class weren't out of control. If we were to measure student involvement or inappropriate behavior carefully in this situation, the s.d. would probably be large.

Padilla wants to know how proficient the students were in English, about the educational level of their parents, and where in Latin America they came from. Why would anyone think all Latino students, or students of any other ethnic group for that matter, would get along with each other?

What attitudes do students' families have about speaking Spanish? Why might some students be unwilling to try more academically challenging work? Why are some students so angry and hostile, while others are eager and open?

Answers to such questions would begin to allow the teacher to make some justifiably discriminating decisions about instructional needs.

As I imagine myself standing before those students, I can define the reasons for their anger and hostility any way I choose. But I'm mindful of Judge Learned Hand's observation that the spirit of liberty is the spirit that is not too sure of itself. I'm not going to understand students until I listen to them.

Robert McNergney is a professor of education at the University of Virginia. His e-mail address is rfm@virginia.edu.

The full case is contained in *Diversity in the Classroom: A Casebook for Teachers and Teacher Educators,* edited by J.H. Shulman & A. Mesa-Bains. To order, send $16.95 to Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 365 Broadway, Hillsdale, NJ 07642, or call 800/926-6579.

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Innovation

How NEA members are cha... schools work

Photographs by Gail Folda

Iowa teacher Peg Shea and two of her students unearth a few worms for examination.

Worms 101

This story starts with worms and ends with professional development. In the middle, a summer enrichment program for students that taught teachers a thing or two about learning.

For two weeks last summer, 80 kids in Council Bluffs, Iowa watched worms.

They measured them, studied them, drew them, even raced them. They made worm homes, ate gummy worms, and cooked noodles that looked like worms.

It was all part of a class called—no surprise—"How To Measure, Cook, and Eat Fried Worms." The title was perfect bait for kids. The subtitle—"Exploring Math and Science Through Nature and Technology"—got parents hooked.

But the class, one of six offered as part of a Summer Institute, did more than link math with worms. It also brought together Association and administration, school and community, local innovation and state support.

Most important, the Institute fused an enrichment opportunity for students with a hands-on professional development seminar for teachers.

Several years ago, administrators and leaders of the Council Bluffs Education Association got together to dream about the ideal school—and to strategize about how to create it.

It wasn't long before talk turned to professional development. "We realized that one of the best ways to improve student achievement was to improve teaching," explains Allen Kurland, veteran principal at Roosevelt Elementary and member of the so-called "Dream Team."

And, says fellow dreamer Bob Moser, then president of CBEA, "teachers wanted to be in on the ground floor. We didn't want to leave professional development to others."

Teachers, Moser says, wanted to see what works in a classroom setting, and they wanted to experiment without fear of failure.

First step toward solution: the Summer Institute. This past year, 30 teachers were involved; 182 kids signed up.

For nearly a year, squeezed in and around their regular duties, teachers planned. Staff members at the University of Northern Iowa and the North Central Educational Laboratory contributed ideas and expertise.

Funding came from a variety of sources. A $37,000 grant from the New Iowa Schools Development Corporation—a coalition that encourages innovation and gets some of its own funding from the state—paved the way. IBM, USWest, and other local groups contributed. And students were charged a $20 fee.

During the summer, teachers were paid their regular salaries for three weeks' work—two weeks teaching, one week evaluation.

Eighty kids ages 6 to 14, four different activities going at all times—and worms everywhere. "It was unbelievable," recalls Peg Shea, one of the nine teachers managing the class.

"We were nine teachers from six different buildings, each very strong in his or her own field. And yet we planned as one," says Shea, a primary teacher at Roosevelt Elementary.

"What was most exciting," Shea adds, "is that *we* were the professionals sharing expertise with each other, instead of listening to a lecture."

For both teachers and students, there were many enlightening moments—"aha's," as Shea calls them.

It was an "aha" moment for Shea when her students begged to go outside for their daily visit to the school's nature center—even in the rain.

Another "aha" came when kids applied themselves more to activities they chose. "When they had the opportunity to choose," Shea says, "they were more excited, they learned more, and they retained more."

"Aha" again on the topic of multi-age learning when a student wrote in an evaluation form: It was nice to have kids of all ages, "because if you needed help, somebody bigger could help you!"

Council Bluffs students became outdoor explorers, proving to teachers that hands-on learning experiences were worth the effort.

A lot happened in three weeks, says Kurland, the Institute's director. "For the teachers involved," he says, "things won't be the same in their classrooms this fall."

And, members of the Dream Team hope, things won't be the same in years to come.

"The Summer Institute is a good trial run," says Association leader Bob Moser, "but we can't stop there."

CBEA and school district leaders want to expand the Summer Institute to a year-round testing ground for innovation in teaching and learning. They want to establish a Learning Center where educators can rotate in for a semester at a time to work together to improve teaching and learning.

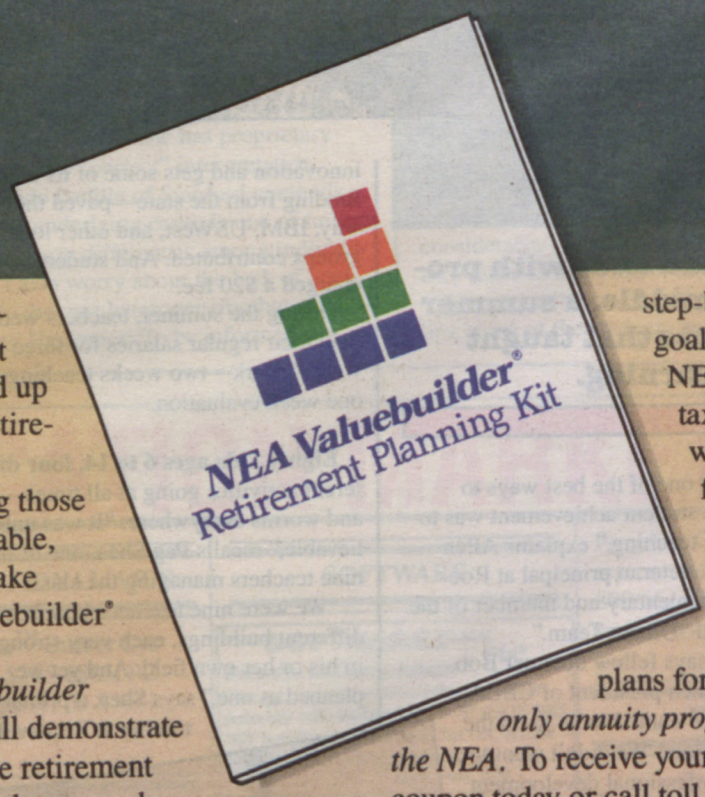
Current plans call for expanded summer sessions in the next two years, then a year-round Center opening the following year.

"We have evidence that what we're doing is effective for students and cost-effective, too. And we certainly have the energy behind it," says principal Kurland. "We just need some money to pay for it."

—Stefanie Weiss

"At retirement, everyone will need about 70% of the income they averaged during their last five working years."

BARRON'S JULY 12, 1993



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INTERNATIONAL

RIGHTS WATCH

Child Labor

On the streets of nearly every major city in the world, it's not unusual to see begging children hawking wares, shining shoes, and offering to provide services.

Not visible are the legions of children, estimated at between 80 million and 200 million worldwide, who are underage workers in homes, shops, factories, alleys, and fields. The problems are especially critical in the developing world and in populous nations with high levels of poverty.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that in China alone 40 million children ages 10 to 14 are employed.

Indian human rights groups indicate that the number there could be 50 million. In Brazil, 17 million children are employed; in Mexico, 10 million.

In the United States, underage children do agricultural field work alongside their parents. New York officials estimate that 7,500 children are working in the garment trade. In 1994, an American supermarket chain paid the largest fines in child labor history for violations of age and hour regulations.

Education International (EI), in conjunction with the ILO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), is part of a global working group seeking an end to child labor.

In addition to participating in the EI effort, NEA is a member of the U.S. National Child Labor Coalition, an organization aimed at eliminating child labor through public education efforts, stricter legislation at the state and federal levels, and other means. "The world's teacher unions would seem to have a special moral duty to fight against child labor," a spokesperson for the ICFTU noted recently.

"These children are our special charges, and they should be in our classrooms. Child labor is a moral blight and an obstacle in the path of the development of children and of their societies."

Classroom Resources

For more information on child labor, contact the Interdepartmental Project on Child Labour, International Labour Organization, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, and the Anti-Slavery International at 180 Brixton Road, London, SW96AT United Kingdom.

For information about the Educators Network and the Children's Action Network of Amnesty International-USA, contact AIUSA-HRE/CAN, Midwest Regional Office, 53 West Jackson, Suite 1162, Chicago, IL 60604, 312/435-6388.

Out of Africa: A Teacher's Perspective

A North Carolina teacher admits he's no expert on Africa, but his work in several African regions has given his students a new perspective on the continent.

Above: Members of the Triangle Students Against Apartheid gather to discuss their mission—creating and fostering cultural, political, and social awareness in their community.

Left: Tom Blanford's travels through Africa allowed him to meet with the district representative of the Ghana Teachers Association, Sam Bediako-Mensah (right), to discuss shared educational issues.

Students at Enloe High School in Raleigh, North Carolina, like most Americans, see only the media's view of Africa. But thanks to engineering teacher Tom Blanford, who's traveled extensively in Africa, they're getting a much better picture.

Blanford's travels through South and West Africa serve as the focus for a class he teaches on modern African culture.

"I'm by no means an expert," says Blanford. "I'm learning right along with my students. But I can tell my students that Africa is not just one place. It has many cultures."

Blanford is the 1994 recipient of the Applegate-Dorros Peace and International Understanding Award. The award recognizes an NEA member who's a good role model and significantly contributes to understanding, peace, and cooperation among nations of the world.

Blanford's interest in and work on various African causes includes formation of the Triangle Students Against Apartheid (TSAA). His interest in South Africa stemmed from a three-week trip there and conversations with Nelson Mandela, members of the African National Congress, and other anti-apartheid activists.

Blanford concentrates his efforts on improving the status of South African education. And he's enlisted his students in the cause.

Currently TSAA is trying to raise $10,000 to establish an educational center in the Tamboville. The center will focus on improving education in a squatter community where 90 students in a classroom is common and where students have no books.

Another TSAA project helps fund a college scholarship for a future teacher—Nicholas Masilangoako, a native South African who is attending the University of the North, in Sovenga, South Africa.

Back home, Blanford is busy organizing student exchanges from West Africa and Guadalupe. On his own, Blanford's hosted teachers from England, Germany, and Sweden.

Bringing students of different cultures closer together in the communities around Raleigh is another of Blanford's projects. With the PTA, Blanford and his students have organized an International Festival Day—for education, integration, and fun.

Blanford hopes one day African students will be eligible for student exchange programs. Right now, African students aren't included in the established international foreign exchange student loop.

"I hope that in the next several years I can continue to learn about other places and people," says Blanford. "There's so much to gain from getting to know people from other countries."

—Cara Elmore

For more information on how to contribute to TSAA: Write TSAA, c/o Thomas Blanford, Enloe High School, 128 Clarendon Crescent, Raleigh, NC 27610.

ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

UN Puts Human Rights First

In 1948, the maturing United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1993—45 years later—another milestone in UN advocacy for human rights was reached when the General Assembly unanimously created the first-ever High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The High Commissioner reports directly to the UN Secretary-General and has the authority and capacity to affect the entire United Nations system. The Commissioner will have the authority to talk directly with governments and work in consort with human rights organizations. As a result, supporters see human rights now becoming a UN priority.

The resolution creating the High Commissioner for Human Rights describes the Commissioner as "promoting and protecting the effective enjoyment by all of all civil, cultural, political, and social rights."

Beyond this, few guidelines are delineated for the work of the office—in fact, the first task of the Commissioner will be to define the position. The vagueness of the mandate and the size of the Commissioner's budget will be key factors in the ultimate effectiveness of the new office.

Last winter, the General Assembly confirmed Jose Ayala Lasso as the UN's first High Commissioner of Human Rights. Lasso is former Ecuadorian ambassador and chair of the working group that drew up the draft resolution creating the position.

"It is the moral duty of humankind to create a culture of human rights," Lasso said in accepting the position, "and when human rights are accepted as a basis of peace, democracy and development, then respect for human rights will be spontaneous."

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Keep an Eye on Your Pension

The economy may be getting stronger, but states continue to use pension funds to improve their fiscal health. Is your state eyeing your pension?

Finding a cure for what ails the nation's health care system is on everyone's mind these days. But how's the health of your state's retirement system? It's a question being asked by a growing number of NEA members, as states increasingly use pension funds to balance their budgets.

These so-called "raids" of public pension plans "represent the single greatest threat to the retirement security of public employees today," said attorney and pension expert Robert Klausner at NEA's 1993 Retirement and Benefits Forum.

"Years ago, state and local governments cleverly disguised raids," he pointed out. "Today, many don't bother to disguise their actions. They simply dip their hands into the till and run out of the room with dollars falling from their pockets."

Take, for example, the widely publicized raid in Rhode Island. In 1991, the state treasurer's office withdrew nearly $21 million from Rhode Island's public pension fund to balance the state budget.

But an IRS investigation of the withdrawal revealed that it violated a law that requires pension plans to be maintained for the exclusive benefit of plan participants. The state of Rhode Island must thus repay its public pension fund $20.9 million by the end of this year.

A different kind of raid took place in California two years ago, when state lawmakers abolished the system for providing cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to members of CalPERS and CalSTRS, the state's two largest public employee retirement systems.

Up until then, CalPERS and CalSTRS had the best COLA programs in the country. The COLAs were funded with excess investment earnings. Together, the two retirement systems had more than $100 billion in the stock market. The earnings were excellent, and so were the COLA opportunities.

But when the state needed $12 billion to compensate for a budget shortfall, the governor and the legislature replaced the program with a guaranteed COLA at a much lower rate.

The California courts ruled that the new COLA was preferable because it provided a guaranteed benefit that wasn't dependent upon investment returns. The governor used the $4 billion in savings to solve the state's fiscal crisis.

Pension plan raids like those in Rhode Island and California have occurred in many states and localities in recent years. According to NEA Research, nine states over the past 12 months have taken actions to defer, reduce, or withhold contributions.

"Many people think of raids as taking money out of a fund and spending it on something else," says NEA Research's Pam Fielding. "But it's also a raid when the employer is supposed to make a contribution and doesn't, or reduces its obligation by changing the formula for determining the employer contribution."

In Alaska, for example, the state legislature enacted a law to cap employer contributions to the Teacher Retirement System at a maximum of 12 percent. In Connecticut, the legislature only funded 80 percent of the required contributions for the 1993-94 fiscal year.

In Maine, state lawmakers balanced the budget by reamortizing the pension system's 25-year mortgage over 35 years, thus lowering the state's contributions.

The practice of raiding public pension funds has generated a great deal of concern among employee and retiree groups—so much so that Congress recently asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to evaluate the problem.

The GAO's research revealed that 67 percent of the plans in its study—128 out of 189 plans—were underfunded. In addition, 75 of the 189 plans, or 40 percent, were undercontributed, meaning that the required contribution wasn't made.

Why do states look to their retirement systems for fiscal relief? Over the past decade, and especially during the most recent recession, many states have found themselves facing serious budget shortfalls. There's approximately $1.2 trillion in public employee retirement systems in the United States, according to NEA Research.

"Public pension funds are like the fatted calf," noted Robert Klausner. "Someone's eyeing them hungrily in difficult economic times."

In addition to deferring, reducing and withholding contributions, some states have shown growing interest in moving public employees from defined benefit plans, which promise a specific benefit, to defined contribution plans, which require employers to deposit a specific amount in an employee's retirement account but guarantee no specific pension amount.

"In the eyes of the beneficiary, a defined contribution plan might look good because it's portable—you can take it with you when you change jobs," says Pam Fielding of NEA Research. "But it's really a loss of commitment on the part of the state."

Another problem is that the beneficiary can outlive the benefit provided under a defined contribution plan. A defined benefit plan always outlives the beneficiary.

In the short term, invading public pension funds may solve a state's budget problems. In the long run, however, it could reduce pension fund flexibility and even result in financial disaster.

For one thing, interest rates are lower now than they were in the 1980s, and they're expected to continue to lag, lowering many pension funds' investment earnings.

For another, the baby boomers who are public employees haven't started to retire. When they do, they'll retire earlier and live longer than past retirees, straining public pension funds.

What can you, as an NEA member, do to ensure the security of your retirement income? First, make it your business to be informed about your state teachers or public employees retirement system. Contact your state Association, which should have information about what the state has in mind for your pension fund. If the Association is lobbying to protect the fund, find out how you can get involved.

Second, if you're eligible for Social Security, contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) and make sure your benefits are being calculated correctly. Call the SSA at 800/SSA-1213.

Finally, if you're looking for ways to supplement your retirement income, consider participating in a 403(b) plan, a tax-sheltered investment vehicle for public employees. NEA Member Benefits offers such a plan through its NEA Value-builder Annuity program.

For more information on the plan and other benefits available to NEA members, contact Member Benefits toll-free at 800/637-4636.

BOOKS

Teaching Equity, Justice to Kids

Enough vague talk about values in the classroom. Finally a practical guide written by teachers.

Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice. Special Edition. Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, and Bob Peterson, eds. Rethinking Schools Limited (1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212, 414/964-9646). 208 pp. $9.50.

These days, it seems that everyone's got something to say about values in the classroom. Teach them, don't teach them, define them, don't define them. What's a teacher to do?

This book provides a real answer. Its message: teach the values of community, justice, and equality—and teach academic skills at the same time. Its biggest selling point: its authors, teachers themselves, demonstrate how.

Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice is a collection of articles, many written by NEA members, that go well beyond principles. The book includes creative teaching ideas, lesson plans, reproducible student handouts, and teaching tips.

A few examples of the rich articles :

➤ In "Race and Respect Among Young Children," veteran kindergarten teacher Rita Tenorio writes about her own journey in understanding how to break down early prejudice in her five- and six-year-old charges.

➤ Milwaukee fifth grade teacher Bob Peterson writes compellingly about his search to establish a curriculum that's grounded in the real-life experiences of his students.

➤ Portland, Oregon teacher Linda Christensen explains how her high school English students analyze the messages about race and gender common in children's literature.

Other topics covered include discipline, tracking, sexual harassment, media bias, and more. The final section of the book is a resource listing of materials that its teacher-authors find "useful in constructing classrooms for social justice."

Social justice writer Jonathan Kozol hits the nail on the head when he says this book is both "packed with moral energy, but also very, very useful." It's a rare—and welcome—combination.

The NEA Professional Library's Top Ten
NEA Bestsellers

Current Rank		Previous Rank
1	***Children of Promise: Literate Activity in Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classrooms,*** by Heath and Mangiola. $8.95. (#1844-3-00-FB)	[11]
2	***Countdown to the First Day of School,*** by Schell and Burden. $4.95. A must-have checklist for new elementary teachers. (#2150-9-00-FB)	[5]
3	***Student Portfolios,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. $9.95. Insights into using portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-00-FB)	[1]
4	***Toward Inclusive Classrooms,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. $9.95. Students with special needs *can* learn with their peers. (#2903-8-00-FB)	[3]
5	***Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools,*** by Stein and Sjostrom. $15.95 for members. (#1864-8-00-FB)	
6	***Innovative Discipline,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. $9.95. New discipline strategies that teachers say really work. (#2904-6-00-FB)	[6]
7	***Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Middle School/Junior High,*** by Tchudi and Huerta. $8.95. (#0777-8-00-FB)	
8	***At-Risk, Low-Achieving Students in the Classroom,*** by Lehr and Harris. $9.95. More than 100 practical ideas for improvement. (#3338-8-00-FB)	[10]
9	***Student Team Learning: A Practical Guide to Cooperative Learning. Third Edition,*** by Slavin. $18.95. (#1845-1-00-FB)	
10	***Team Organization: Promise—Practices and Possibilities,*** by Erb and Doda. $12.95. A step-by-step guide for middle schools. (#3075-3-00-FB)	

The numbers in brackets indicate last month's rank, if any. All the resources listed above are published by and available from the NEA Professional Library, a service for NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community. To order any book listed here or for more information, call 800/229-4200.

DATA BANK

Computer Glitch

Despite the tremendous growth of computers in schools, a gap remains between the haves and have-nots. Below: how the top five and the bottom five states compare in number of students per computer.

The top five states in students per computer:

Wyoming	8.3
Alaska	8.8
North Dakota	10.9
Kansas	11.0
West Virginia	11.2

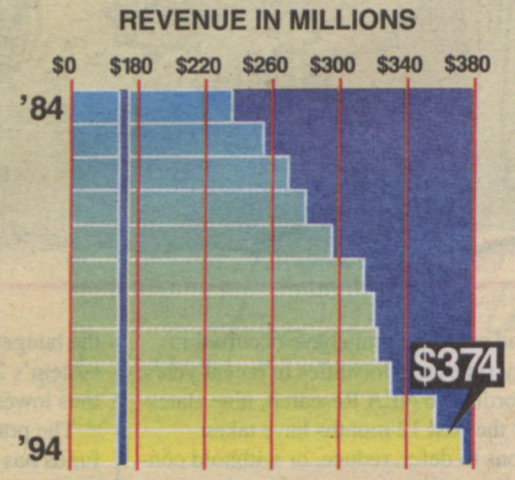
The bottom five states in students per computer:

Louisiana	19.3
Tennessee	19.6
California	19.8
Vermont	20.4
New Hampshire	22.3

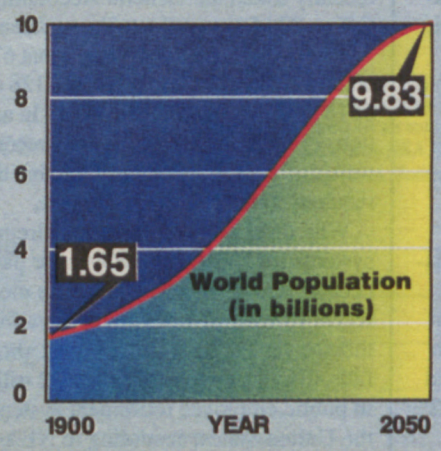
Source: *Quality Education Data Inc.*

What's on Sale?

Evidently, it didn't matter to students this year. Spending on clothes and other back-to-school goods was up again, even though merchants say they offered fewer sales. Name brands scored well, especially in clothing choices. Right: A look at back-to-school spending over the past 10 years.



Source: *University of Georgia*



How Many's Too Many?

The recent U.N. conference on population stirred up a controversy about the growth of the world's population, now estimated at 5.6 billion. The conference focused on population patterns in developing nations where populations could double by the year 2050. Populations of developed countries have stabilized over the past several years.

Who's Minding the Kids?

Each day, nearly 1.6 million kids, including a half million 11 and under, are home alone after school. Looking at the 21.2 million kids ages 5 to 14 whose mothers work outside the home, the Census Bureau found:

- **In the Midwest, 12.1 percent of the children were left alone; in the West, 7.5 percent; Northeast, 5.7 percent; and South, 4.8 percent.**
- **76 percent spend most of their time in school when their mothers are working.**
- **23 percent of pre-schoolers go to child-care facilities; fathers care for 20 percent; 18 percent are with other family members.**

Source: *"Who's Minding the Kids," U.S. Census Bureau*

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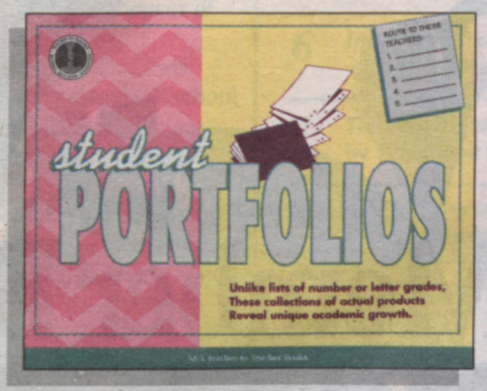
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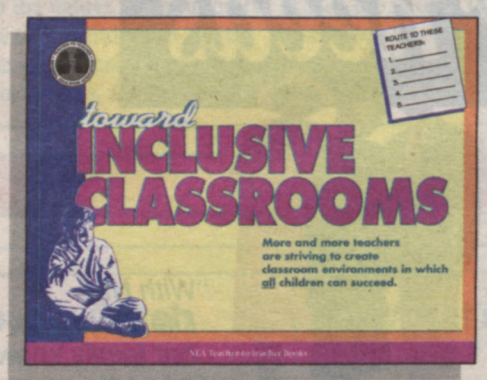
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FOR YOUR BENEFIT

BAD CREDIT

Puts Reputation at Risk

Twenty years ago, you might have been able to bounce a check and not get hurt too badly. Today, with international computer networks tracking every financial transaction, one misstep could bring dire consequences.

Anyone who does any kind of business with you routinely checks your credit report. A bad credit report can cost you a job, a promotion, an apartment, a mortgage, an award, or a political appointment.

"Your credit rating has become a reflection of who you are as a financial person," says Esther Berger, a financial consultant and vice president at PaineWebber in Beverly Hills. "It's used as a benchmark to measure you, and all. kinds of decisions are made based on it."

That means everyone needs a good credit report. The first step is to get a copy of yours. Start with TRW Corporation, one of the three largest credit bureaus, and the only one that gives a free annual report. The complimentary report was offered a couple of years ago after the bureau came under attack for making so many mistakes on consumer reports. You may as well use that to your advantage.

To get your copy, you must send a request in writing to TRW, P.O. Box 2350, Chatsworth, CA 91313-2350. You must include a verification of your name and address—a photocopy of a billing from a major creditor, a utility bill, or a driver's license that includes your current address.

Print your name, middle initial, last name, and spouse's first name. Give your current address and any previous addresses for the past five years. Sign the request. You should receive the report in two to three weeks, TRW says.

Examine the report carefully. Look at the footnotes to be certain you understand the cryptic symbols. For example, "C/OAM" means "charge-off amount," indicating that a creditor has written you off for nonpayment.

Write to the bureau immediately if you find anything suspicious, disputing the information and asking for an investigation. If the bureau can't verify the data, it must be removed. And, if you wish, TRW must notify any creditor who saw the incorrect information in the past six months or any potential employer who saw it in the past two years.

If, after an investigation, the credit bureau concludes that the disputed information is correct, but you still say it's wrong, go back to the creditor—the bank or store that provided the incorrect information—and get it to amend your record. This may involve pulling all your records, receipts, and checks as documentation.

Follow up, making certain the creditor reports the change to the bureaus. You should also add a statement to your file if some life crisis, such as a job loss or divorce, has caused you to fall behind on bills.

You may be able to help a bad (but accurate) record by approaching creditors directly. For example, if a creditor wrote you off as a lost cause, offer to begin repayments if your file can be corrected and updated. If your record indicates you're a "slow pay," start settling your accounts promptly. "The new information will become more important than the old," said Ruth Susswein, executive director of Bankcard Holders of America, a consumer group in McLean, Virginia.

Negative information on your report that is accurate can't be removed for seven years. Bankruptcies aren't removed for 10 years. Don't waste money on "credit doctors" or credit repair firms that claim they can clean up your report for a fee of anywhere from $200 to $700. Some of these firms flood the credit bureau with letters disputing all the information on your report because they know that the bureau must remove it if it can't be verified within 30 days, Susswein says. As a result, the information is removed—temporarily— and the credit repair firm claims a victory. But when the creditors report the information anew, it goes right back on your file.

"The point is what they promise to do, they can't do," she says.

Likewise, resist the sales pitches of major credit bureaus for services that will monitor your records. For a fee of about $20, they promise to let you know if negative information is added to your report. You can save yourself the money by checking your report once a year.

Even if your report is negative, you shouldn't give up on credit. If you're simply a slow pay, vow to change your habits. If your bills have been written off by companies as uncollectible, or if you have filed for bankruptcy, you will have some work to do in rebuilding your credit.

Perhaps the best option is to obtain a secured credit card. This is a card that requires collateral, like a bank deposit, that is roughly equal to the amount of the credit line. For example, you might be required to deposit $300 in the bank in order to receive a $300 credit line. You'll receive interest on your deposit. And you'll pay interest on the items you charge.

Not so long ago, there were only a couple of banks that offered these cards, Susswein says. Everyone in the business knew who they were, and secured cards were viewed differently by other creditors.

Today there are nearly 20 banks that offer secured cards. The same banks also offer unsecured lines. Although the credit bureaus ask banks to report whether a particular credit line is secured or unsecured, in a Bankcard Holders survey, only one bank said it did. "It looks and acts like any other credit card," Susswein said. "And it can help you rebuild your record."

—Mary Rowland

Ask for Help

Here are some sources that may be able to help you put your credit condition in better shape.

Bankcard Holders of America, a consumer group, publishes a number of pamphlets, including:

Building Credit. Banks across the nation offering secured credit cards. $4

Debt Zapper. A personalized pay-off schedule that shows you how much to pay each month on each of your credit cards to pay them off in the fastest, least expensive way. $15.

Understanding Credit Bureaus. Designed to help build and maintain a positive credit profile. $1.

How to Re-Establish Good Credit. $1.

To request a full list of the topics available or to order any of the pamphlets listed above, send a check in the appropriate amount to Bankcard Holders of America, 524 Branch Drive, Salem, VA 24153, or call, 800/553-8025.

RAM Research Corporation publishes a newsletter for consumers called *CardTrak.* It includes information on low-rate cards, no-fee cards, secured cards, and rebate cards. You can order the most recent copy by sending a check for $5 to CardTrak, Box 1700, Frederick, MD 21702.

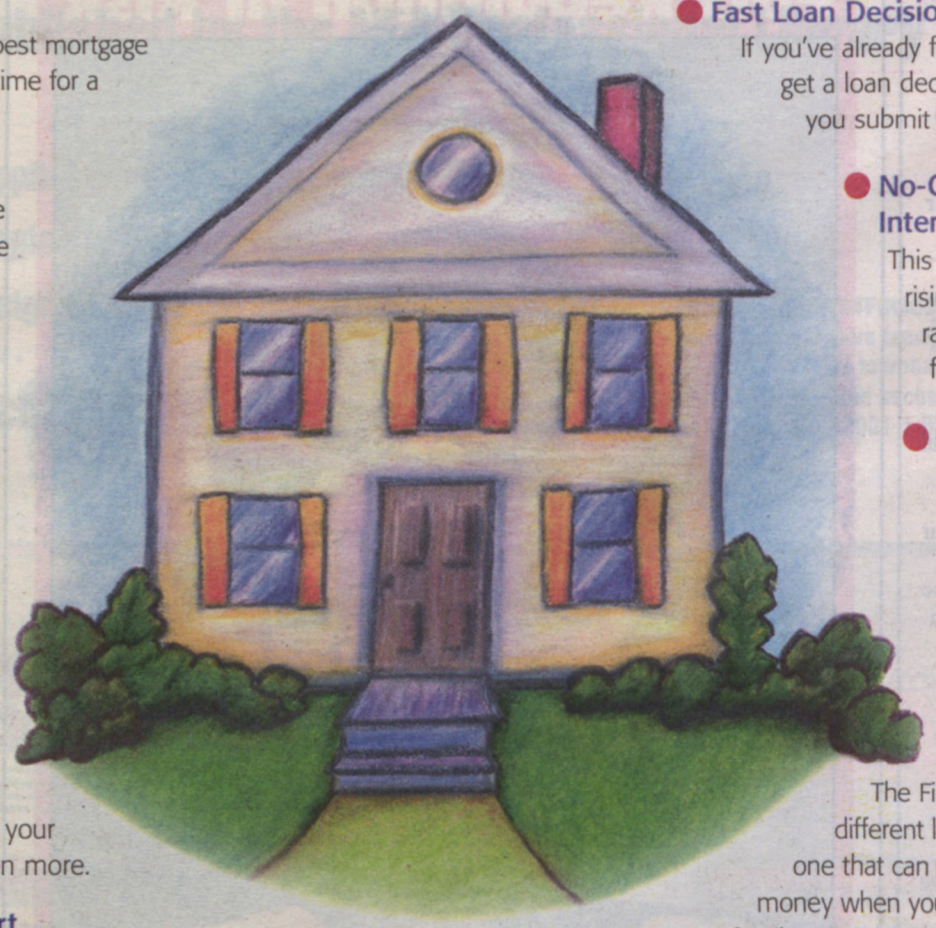
NEW

The NEA Home Financing Program.℠

It Takes The Work Out Of Getting A Mortgage... And Puts Buying Power In Your Hands.

The NEA is proud to present a breakthrough benefit for NEA members. It's the NEA Home Financing Program,℠ provided by Prudential Home Mortgage, a leader in home financing. Whether you want to buy a home, are refinancing the one you own, or are looking for a home equity loan, we believe the NEA Home Financing Program offers the best overall combination of service, benefits and value on the market today. Here are some of the benefits you'll enjoy when buying a home or refinancing a mortgage with the program.

- **Competitive Interest Rates.**
  The program starts with some of the best mortgage interest rates around. You can call anytime for a free quote at 1-800-NEA-4-YOU.
- **Full Refund Of Appraisal Cost.**
  After closing, your appraisal cost will be refunded in full. This represents a value of $360 or more.
- **Loan Commitment* Before You Start House Hunting.**
  Get your mortgage commitment before you start shopping for a home. You'll save time and when you're ready to negotiate with sellers, you'll be in a stronger bargaining position.
- **Low Origination Fee And A Zero-Point Option.**
  Because we know that every dollar you save helps increase your home buying power, the program offers a low origination fee. You can even choose a *zero-point option,* reducing your up-front, out-of-pocket expenses even more.
- **No Charge For Your Credit Report.**
  We'll even pay for your credit report when you apply.



- **Fast Loan Decision.**
  If you've already found the right home, you can get a loan decision in as little as 24 hours after you submit your application.**
- **No-Cost, 60-Day Interest Rate Lock Option.**
  This option gives you protection from rising interest rates by locking in your rate at application or anytime up to five business days before closing.
- **Low Down Payment Option.**
  If you thought you couldn't come up with the down payment, this option can make the difference. With the proper documentation, your down payment can be as low as 5%.***
- **Special First-Time Home Buyer Program.**
  The First Home℠ program offers two different low down payment options, with one that can be as low as 3% of your own money when you have financial help from your family or a community organization.***

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We know you're busy. So, experienced mortgage counselors are available for extended hours, 8 a.m. to midnight, Eastern time, Monday through Friday. You can call from your home or workplace when it's convenient for you. A counselor will review the wide range of mortgages and home equity loans available, and help determine which one is best for you. There's no obligation, just information. And when you're ready, you can apply right over the phone.

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Yes, please send me information about this new member benefit. I am:

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My Telephone ( )_____ The Best Time To Reach Me _____ am _____ pm

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THF 114 11/94

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* Your loan commitment will be subject to the terms and conditions contained in the loan commitment letter for this program. Call a mortgage counselor for details.

** Eligibility requirements for the 24-hour loan decision include: Primary, purchase transactions with a down payment of 20% or more and a signed purchase contract. Condominiums and co-operative properties are not eligible. Also, because your loan decision is not subject to an appraisal, you may want to consult your legal advisor to include an appraisal contingency in your purchase contract. Other conditions may apply. Contact a mortgage representative for details.

*** Eligibility for the low down payment options is limited to primary, purchase transactions and a maximum loan amount of $203,150. Other conditions apply. Contact a mortgage representative for details.

The NEA is not offering or originating any loans in connection with this program. NEA Home Financing Program is a service mark of the NEA Member Benefits Corporation.

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Example – 30-year $100,000 mortgage: Fixed, simple interest rate 9%, APR 9.209%, 360 $804.63 monthly payments. Example – 20-year $100,000 mortgage: Fixed, simple interest rate 8.125%, APR 8.377%, 240 payments at $844.24 a month. 15-year $100,000 mortgage: Fixed, simple interest rate 9%, APR 9.317%, 180 $1,014.27 monthly payments. 6-month ARM, initial simple interest rate 5%, APR 7.875% (subject to increase), 6 $536.83 monthly payments, semi-annual adjustments thereafter. 1-year ARM, initial simple interest rate 7%, APR 7.185% (may increase), 12 $665.31 monthly payments, annual adjustments thereafter. 10/1-year ARM, initial simple interest rate 9%, APR 8.932% (may increase), 120 $804.63 monthly payments, annual adjustments thereafter. 7 YEAR ADVANTAGE, simple interest rate 8.5%, APR 8.861%, 83 $768.92 monthly payments; 1 $93,847.22 payment at maturity. 5 YEAR ADVANTAGE, simple interest rate 8.5%, APR 8.962%, 59 $768.92 monthly payments; 1 $96,258.70 payment at maturity.

Information in this ad is accurate as of the date of printing and is subject to change at anytime without notice. Equal Housing Opportunity.

Your NEA

Q&A

Budget Basics

What is the NEA budget for 1994-95?
NEA estimates income of $179,157,000 and expenses of $177,657,000 for 1994-95. That leaves a contingency of $1,500,000, which is consistent with the Bylaws.

The estimated dues income for 1994-95 is based on an expected membership of 2,110,100, an increase of 22,500 over 1993-94.

Who makes budget decisions?
The six-member NEA Budget Commitee—chaired by NEA Secretary-Treasurer Marilyn Monahan—includes five members of the Board of Directors along with NEA Vice-President Bob Chase. The committee meets six times a year to review budget proposals.

What's more, the committee holds open hearings at each of the six regional leadership conferences and other conferences across the country to solicit member opinions on how their dues dollars should be spent.

The budget is built on revenue from membership dues, which are set by the NEA Representative Assembly.

What guides budget decisions?
Each program and program budget is evaluated on whether it corresponds, directly or indirectly, to the achievement of NEA's strategic objectives.

For example, a quarter of each dues dollar is allocated for strategic objective 3: to protect the job security and improve the terms and conditions of employment for all education employees.

Who sets the final budget?
The 160 members of the NEA Board of Directors approve the budget each spring, but delegates to the Representative Assembly in July have the final say.

How can I get a copy of the budget?
Contact a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly or your local UniServ office. In addition, *NEA Today* publishes the NEA Secretary-Treasurer's audited report on the state of NEA's finances in the February issue each year.

SPEAKING OUT ON THE ISSUES

NEA Sparks Change—Inside and Out

NEA's Learning Labs all look a little different. They should. Each of the 26 Learning Lab sites is an experiment in school district reform, based on local needs and wants.

Kansas's Manhattan-Ogden school district—one of the newest Learning Lab sites—is building on nearly five years of cooperative activities between Kansas State University's College of Education and Amanda Arnold School as part of NEA's Mastery in Learning Project. The partnership will continue with increasing numbers of KSU students gaining real world experiences in district schools and schools gaining access to KSU learning technology.

In Leland, Mississippi, also a new Lab site, the Leland Association of Educators is striving to help district staff make the transition from more traditional ways of delivering education to the more innovative practices of exemplary schools across the nation. The aim: to help Leland youth get an education commensurate with that of peers in innovative districts. These sites will get seed money from NEA, but—more significant—NEA links them other with schools and school employees who've embarked on reform efforts.

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Marilyn Monahan likens the Labs to bonfires. "Our plan," says Monahan, "is that the Labs will ignite into full-scale prairie fires that will sweep across the education landscape."

The Association office that oversees NEA's Learning Labs—the National Center for Innovation (NCI)—now also includes the Professional Standards and Practices unit program and staff. And NEA has created a new center—the Center for Education Technology—to coordinate all of NEA's efforts to bring new technologies to the field of education.

WORKING FOR YOU

Making the Numbers Add Up

The NEA budget is of daily concern to all NEA employees, but only a handful of Association staff know it as well and from as many perspectives as Mike McPherson, the Association's manager for administration and finance.

McPherson is involved in developing and monitoring the budget and serving as a staff liaison to NEA's six-member budget committee.

Carolyn Salisbury

As NEA's internal auditor, McPherson says his job involves "making sure the fiscal procedures of the NEA adhere to governance policies and also fall within generally acceptable accounting principles."

But McPherson's work entails much more than simply making the numbers add up. He coordinates the work of a whole host of NEA employees.

"I work closely with NEA's 20 administrative managers," says McPherson. "They provide me with regular reports on the budget and expenditure status of their respective units and I work with them on providing analyses of their finances for officers and other staffers."

Each month, McPherson analyzes budgeted versus actual expenditures to ensure fiscal compliance with the program plans that serve as a basis for the budget.

One of the most attractive features of the job is the ever-changing array of duties, says McPherson.

One day he's attending budget committee meetings and the next he's sitting in a courtroom serving as an expert witness on agency-fee calculations.

Agency fees cover the cost of providing services to non-members who are part of a bargaining unit. Frequently, McPherson testifies on those calculations in one of the 22 agency-shop states.

"I like the variety of the job," notes McPherson, "and I like working with both staff and elected leaders."

SHORT TAKES

UniServ Training. NEA will accept applications for its 1995 affirmative action UniServ intern program for ethnic minorities and women until January 30, 1995. Training will begin July 9, 1995, last 4 1/2 weeks, and be followed by a three-month field experience. Upon completion of the field apprenticeship, candidates will be certified as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate. All letters of interest must be received at the NEA by December 16, 1994. Faxed copies will not be accepted. An application packet along with basic instructions will be sent after a letter of interest is received at the NEA office starting December 1, 1994. Address letters to Deloris Edwards Rozier, c/o Brenda Vincent, NEA, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Contact your local UniServ director for further information.

Letters

Lack Of Respect

As a certified school nurse, I'm once again disappointed at the lack of support, respect, and recognition my union gives to school nurses ("What If You Make A Mistake?" October).

Nurses should be on the front lines as more students with special medical needs enroll in our schools. Instead, Association "experts" suggest that "new job descriptions, such as medical technician or health and safety assistant, [can] cover anticipated student health needs."

How dare you jeopardize my job and the well-being of school-age children!

Would NEA recommend that teachers be replaced by teacher's aides? Of course not.

Debbie Kahn
Mt. Laurel, New Jersey

Special Needs

As an inclusive educator, I face many of the same challenges as the members of the Westerly staff ("What Do You Do When You're Faced With Inclusion?" September).

I agree that including students with disabilities in regular school takes time and dedication on the part of all parties involved. Moving in small steps has allowed us to include students with mental disabilities more effectively than if we had attempted it districtwide. Being included with their peers has opened many doors for these students and given them opportunities that never would have been available to them before.

I commend the staff at Westerly and hope many more schools around the country will accept the challenge of inclusion.

Nancy Pappaspanos
St. Charles, Missouri

As a middle school art specialist, I read with interest your article and NEA's position on inclusion.

For the past 15 years, I have taught behavior disordered, the mentally impaired, the "normal" child, the Down's syndrome child, the hearing impaired, and assorted others with no aide and a full class load, usually 20 to 30 children.

Never in my experience have we followed the guidelines you cite: readiness, long-range planning, small steps, ongoing staff development, programs tailored to student needs, an extensive support system, class size maximum, parental support, or shared planning time.

As a result, many "normal" children have had their education interrupted until the disruptive special needs student can be isolated, sent to time out, or otherwise cared for. If this sounds like an educational nightmare, it can be.

Please don't misunderstand me. I believe all children should have an opportunity to be educated in the best way possible. I have had considerable success with most of the special needs children I have taught and have had few objections to their presence in my classroom.

However, now that inclusion has become the "educational thing of the '90s," children who are extremely limited in ability, including psycho-motor ability, are lined up at my door. I believe it is unreasonable to place such children in classes where their needs cannot be served.

Elizabeth Bishop-Martin
Athens, Georgia

The NEA has given its support and encouragement for inclusion based on the recommendations of a committee composed of special ed and regular education teachers and support staff. It saddens me to see that no representative of gifted and talented students was included on your committee. If they had been, your conclusions might have been different.

Sandy Jomini
Helena, Montana

No Excuses

Jackson Browne is a hero? (Heroes & Zeroes, September). I must admit that "Running on Empty" is epic. I must also admit that writing is power.

But if writing gives him control, maybe he should have been handed pencil and paper so that he wouldn't have used his fists on Daryl Hannah. If writing gives him an edge, maybe his tribute to cocaine wasn't necessary.

If Jackson Browne deserves a gold star, then I'm going to rake in the Nobel Prize.

Paul Beckwith
Angola, Indiana

Short On Time?

What was the purpose of the article that showed how much time American students spend in academics compared with students in other countries (Trends, September)? Is this ammunition for our administrators so they can cut non-academic teachers? At least 30 percent of the NEA is made of these teachers! You failed to present the other side of the coin.

In the countries mentioned, students take a test at a certain age that tracks them to a "college bound" school. Their system allows little freedom compared with ours. In addition, the school day and year is longer in those countries for both students and teachers.

I was very disappointed to see this in *NEA Today*. Are you working for us or against us?

Brad George
Clinton, Massachusetts

Balancing Act

I found the article on health care ("For Kids' Sake," September) particularly interesting, especially when I read through the resolutions passed at the NEA convention. Your article reports many of the challenges facing our current health care system and tells of several cases where there were problems with the delivery of health care in our country. Later, as I read Resolution B-55, I laughed.

Resolution B-55 calls for "full, constructive, balanced, and accurate presentations" of information placed in print and non-print media. Your article on health care was anything but balanced.

Where were the reports of children who are well and prospering because of our current health system? Where were the reports of children who have had major operations and life-saving procedures? Where were the reports of children whose parents belong to HMOs and were very happy with the service they were provided?

I believe the NEA may be guilty of the old proverb, "Do as I say, not as I do." Perhaps the leadership of the NEA should become more informed of the problems and desires of their local membership—not just those who go to the RA—before printing an incomplete, destructive, and unbalanced article.

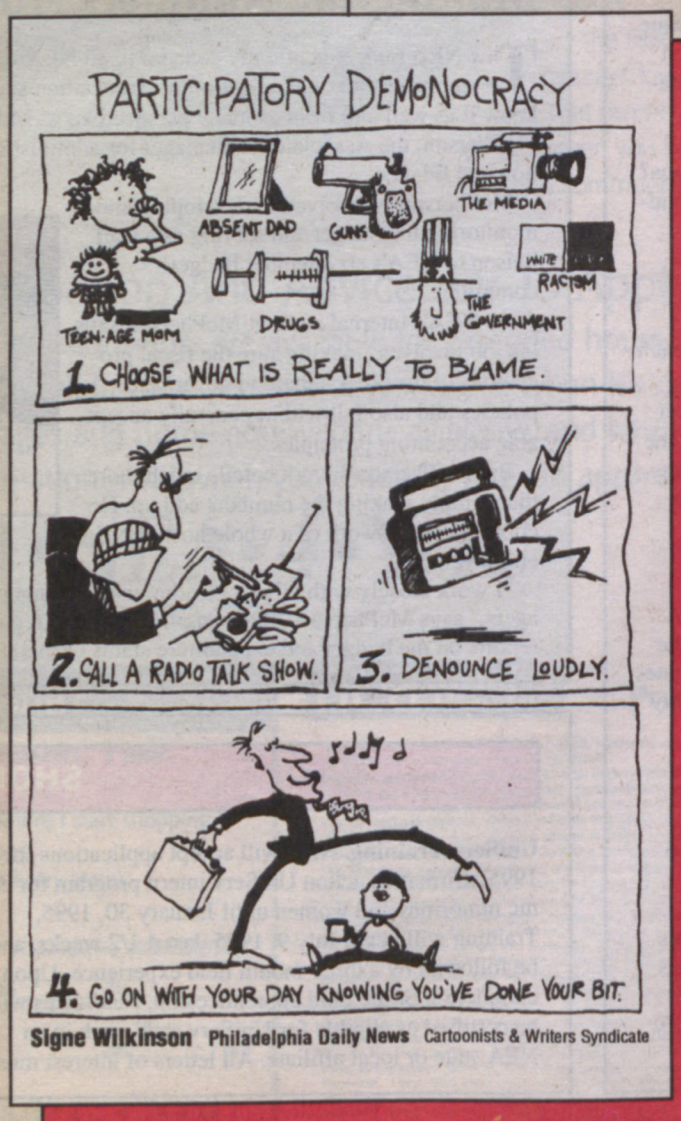
Robert Bent,
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

I'm glad NEA stands firm when it comes to fighting legislative efforts to tax health benefits ("For Kids' Sake," September). But somewhere along the line, you've forgotten about retired teachers.

At a time when our income has decreased tremendously, we must pay for our health benefits in "after-tax" income. While I feel fortunate in being able to stay in my school's plan at group rates, I spend $4,100 of my pension income to pay the $3,000 annual premium.

Wouldn't it be nice if the playing field for retirees could be leveled a bit so that we could deduct the cost of our health care premiums from our income tax? Now that we're retired, please don't forget us.

W.B. McClenachan
New Hope, Pennsylvania



'A' for Adele

Kudos to Adele Jones for her high standards in teaching, an anomaly and rarity these days (Sounding Board, September). The myopic dunderheads who fired her should be indicted for being ignorant, naive nincompoops.

For almost 30 years, I was periodically called into the principal's office to justify my high failure rate. My comprehensive and extensive records showed proof positive that I graded correctly.

Most astute critics of education would strongly agree that tough teachers like Adele Jones get far better results than wishy-washy permissive ones.

Proof of this to me is that I receive far more letters and phone calls from my former students, including the ones that failed, than a whole battalion of teachers who I knew as soft, and who in my estimation were mostly unscholarly, non-astute, mediocre instructors.

Fiat lux!

Robert Guy Arthur
Kings Park, New York

Mislabeled

Label reading is important to everyone, and I was glad to see the article on food labels (Student Health, September).But while it mentioned that nutrition is taught in health and science class, it failed to mention that nutrition *and* reading food labels are taught in family and consumer science courses (formerly known as home economics).

The last statement in the article read, "An explanation of the new food labels and how to read them should be part of the curriculum." It is in the curriculum—and has been there for years. Dr. Klish and the public seem unaware of this fact.

Dawn Gary
Lafayette, Louisiana

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- By mail: Write to Letters, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- By FAX: 202/822-7206.
- By phone: 202/822-7201.
- By NEA Online: Sign on to NEA Online and keyword to *NEA Today*.

For information about subscribing to NEA Online, see page 25.

Debate

Should Schools Be Run Like Businesses?

YES

Sharon Meeks has been teaching business education for 14 years, currently at Twin Falls (Idaho) High School. A long-time Association activist, Meeks has served on many committees of the Twin Falls Education Association and is one of its past vice-presidents.

NO

Emma Clevenger is a Chapter 1 reading teacher at Adamston Elementary School in Clarksburg, West Virginia. She's taught for 10 years. Before that she was a teacher aide and school secretary. Clevenger is a former president of the Harrison County Education Association.

What is success?

In our society, people are successful when they work toward or accomplish specific goals. That's true for students as well as those in the business world.

As an educator, I want to help my students succeed by working with them to achieve common goals. And I believe that can be done by using many of the same methods businesses use.

My students and I collaborate to solve problems, use knowledge and research to make informed decisions, work to increase productivity, and strive for personal improvement.

Some people define mastery of these behaviors as having business skills. I define it as having people skills. Whether success is measured in product, profit, or a passing grade on a competency test, the result is a job well done—success.

All through school, young people should be learning how society functions.

From observation, research, and personal experience, I've identified some critical procedures necessary for success in business—and I believe it's my obligation to prepare students for classroom success using those same techniques.

With the help of the America 2000 National Goals and the workbook "What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000" [publication # PB92146711. $19.50 plus $4 p&h from NTIS, 5285 Port Royal Rd. Springfield, VA 22161]. I try to incorporate into my lessons a three-part foundation.

Part I is basic skills—reading, writing, mathematics, listening, and speaking. Part II is thinking skills—creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, knowing how to learn, and reasoning. And Part III is personal qualities—responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty.

As an educator helping to train young people to enter the business world, I'm both a role model and an example of what my students may experience in the world outside. I shouldn't do one thing in the classroom and expect my students to adjust to a different game plan in society.

When I tell my students that research and knowledge are important, I must demonstrate this. If I tell students that we're all responsible for our actions, I must allow them to be responsible.

If I tell them that all persons in an organization need to be active and communicative, I must do my part as a faculty member, an NEA member, a classroom teacher, a club adviser, a community member, and in any other visible role.

Many schools are now moving toward business-like management, incorporating business principles such as site-based decision making, balanced budgets, collaborative decision making, and profit margins.

For me, the profit in my classroom is that students learn and succeed. Of course, some profit margins are better than others—some students succeed more than others.

Businesses of the '90s are undergoing many changes. Employees are participating more than ever in decision making, in profit sharing, in product creation.

Schools—which prepare students for jobs, often in business—would do well to emulate some business practices.

Classrooms of the '90s are also undergoing many changes. Students are demanding more of education. They want to be ready to face the world.

The saying, "wait until you're in the real world," baffles me.

For a student, the classroom *is* the real world. Let's make an effort to make it look more like the real world. I challenge all teachers to identify the skills they want their students to master and then align their teaching so everyone can be successful.

Why are educators continually bombarded with the suggestion that our schools be run like businesses? Why do schools contract out crucial school services to private sector companies?

I don't want schools run like businesses, because education isn't a business. Our students are human beings—and their learning can't be measured on a profit and loss statement.

At the same time, I don't think private companies can deliver school services better than school employees.

Let's look at the child first. A child's achievement should never be measured in dollars and cents—each child is a unique being with unique needs and abilities.

We can't place our students into a mold and expect each to exit exactly the same. We can't compare turning out students who are well-educated with turning out automobiles.

A school isn't an assembly line—and to run a school it as if it were is to short-change kids as we try to find ways to plow back "savings" or invest the money recaptured.

It wasn't by accident that we established our nation's school system as a public one. As such, it's accountable to the citizens of the community. And it's up to those citizens—not a for-profit business executive—to decide whether the system is succeeding. If citizens decide it's not, they can elect new leaders to run the schools.

What happens when we place our education system and services in the hands of private businesses? Let's look at one example—Fairfax County, Virginia.

When adminstrators there contracted out transportation services, children were left standing for long periods of time waiting for buses to pick them up. Sometimes buses didn't arrive at all because of mechanical problems.

Needless to say, Fairfax County's school transportation system is no longer contracted out. It's now in the hands of district employees—well qualified, dedicated persons from the community who care about the children.

Some districts also contract out food services. One disadvantage of this is that companies serving large numbers of people for profit often buy their products in bulk at the cheapest prices, not necessarily getting the best quality.

In contrast, a locally hired staff provides students with a personal touch. Many cooks know the kids by name and chat with them for a few minutes, demonstrating their concern and building the kids' self-esteem.

When custodial services are contracted out, most employees receive only a minimum wage and use a poorer quality of supplies.

We all know what happens to the appearance of our schools when they're cared for by people who don't receive what's necessary to take pride in their work. I don't think any of us want children to have to face these conditions.

Education means developing the whole child—socially, physically, emotionally, and educationally. I certainly don't look at my students as a business venture.

When I meet and talk with my former students, our conversations don't turn to the monetary value of their education, but to experiences we shared as they developed the necessary skills to move through their school years.

I'll grant that maybe a part of our educational system needs to operate as a business because of the way education is funded. But more often than not, I feel that the people following the money are so far removed from the students that they've lost sight of the human aspect of education.

It's Your Turn!

This debate on whether schools should be run like businesses doesn't have to stop here on these pages. You can weigh in with your opinion through NEA Online, the Association's national computer network.

To join the dialogue on this debate, just sign onto NEA Online, keyword "NEA Today," and then click the "Publications Message Board." Once on the board, select the "NEA Today Debate" topic.

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